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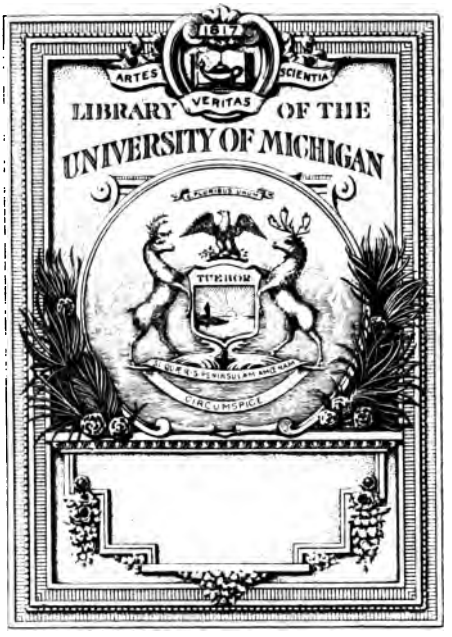
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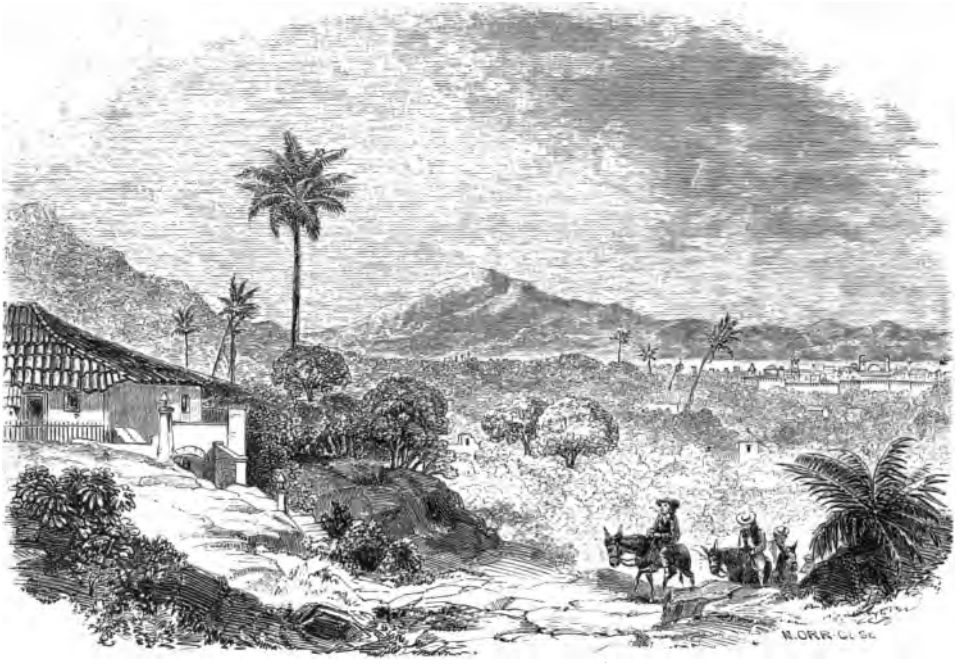

CITY OF CAMPEACHY, YUCATAN.

TRAVELS

37388

IN

CENTRAL AMERICA,

INCLUDING ACCOUNTS OF SOME

Regions Unexplored since the Conquest,

FROM THE FRENCH OF

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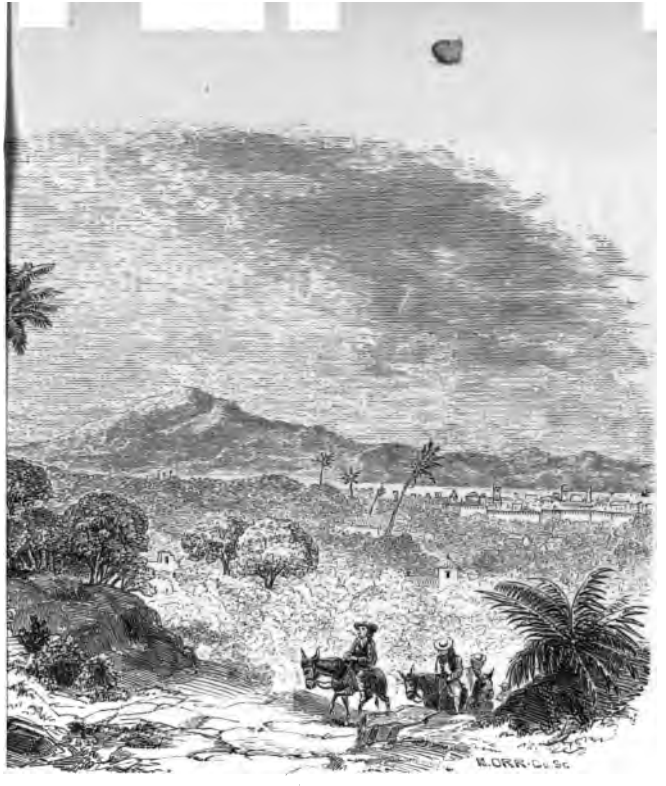

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THE CHEVALIER ARTHUR MORELET,

BY MRS. M. F. SQUIER.

INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY E. GEO. SQUIER.

EDWARD DORSCH M.D. MONROE, MICH.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

City of Campeachy.		*Frontispiece.*
Map,	to face page	19
Ruins of Palenque,		64
Carvings found at Palenque,	to face	97
Hieroglyphics found at Ocosingo,		98
Lagoons of Campeachy,		136
Island of Peten,		194
Theatre of Guatemala,		306
The Hills and Tierra Templada,	to face	325
City of Guatemala,	to face	379

CONTENTS.

I.

THE LAGOONS.

PAGE

Campeachy—Surrounding Scenery—Fruits and Flowers—*Casones*—Currency—Insect pests—Antiquities—Physical features of Yucatan—*Acalan*—Population—Social animosities—Preparation for departure—The Mediterranean of the New World—Primitive Navigation—*Canoas* and *Cayucos*—Embarkation—Waiting for a Pass—Disappointment—Off at last—*El Morro*—Roadstead of *Ceiba*—Priestly pastimes—The father and his flock—Champoton—Reminiscences of the Conquest—Island of Carmen—Sterility of the soil—Character of the people—The town of Carmen—Picturesque suburbs—The *mansanilla*—Vegetable wealth—Misplaced melodies—Climate of Carmen—Aboriginal relics—Night thoughts—Lagoon of Terminos—Hydrography of the country—The river Usumasinta—Fishes—Start for the interior—Scorpions—Entomology on a large scale—Sunset—*Boca Chica*—A maze of waters—Gigantic forests—Storm—River navigation—Animated nature—*Isla de Pajaros*—A Mosquito Malakoff—*Rio Viejo*—Retrospects—Palizada—Spanish American hospitality—Origin of the town—Its trade—Inhabitants—Surrounding swamps and their inmates—The *jacana*—Logwood cutting and peonage—Mangos—Palma real—Varieties of fish and turtles—Rattlesnakes—The deadly *nahuyaca*..... 19

II.

THE RUINS OF PALENQUE.

Departure from Palizada—*Posol*—A Boat race—*Aliates*—Ortega—Night adventures—Magnificent foliage—The *chorcha*—A jaguar—Mosquitos—The *buho*—The *nahuyaca* again—Remedies against snake bites—Fida—Lagoon of Catasaja—Forest solitudes—Village of Las Playas—Town of Santo Domingo—Magnificent scenery—A true philosopher—Primitive habits—Custodian of the ruins—Vandalism of travellers—Installation in the Palace of Palenque—Speculations—Origin of the ruins—Voices of the night—Lost!—An escape—The *hocco*—Adieu to the Ruins—Geological discoveries—The end of an exile..... 65

III.

THE WOODS OF CAMPEACHY.

Return to San Geronimo—The logwood tree—Dye-wood cuttings—The laborers—The *Mayoral*—Absence of roads—*Peonage*—Cattle raising—Aguadoras—Hacienda life—General improvidence—Natural history of the country—Remarkable frogs—Passport troubles—The Indians—Their alleged inferiority—Their ancient civilization—Humane policy of the Spanish crown towards them—Their condition under the new government—Retrogression—Indians of the *Tierras Calientes*—Their mode of life—Moral development—Superstitions—Education—Social condition—Local attachments—Food—Reserve before strangers—Improvidence and laws to

PAGE

prevent it—The *Mita*—The Indians of *Los Altos*, or Highlands—Their superior intelligence and industry—The future of the Indians of Central America—Doubtful prospects—Probable extinction of the Whites..... 118

IV.

THE USUMASINTA RIVER.

Diurnal storms—Ford of San Geronimo—Alligators—Deer—The coyol palm—Savannas—Unbroken solitudes—Balancan—The snake's bane, or *platanillo*—Tumuli—Improvidence of the people—Pearl fishing in fresh water—Rio San Pedro—Night on the river—Storm—Inflammatory tendencies of the system under the tropics—La Cabecera—An European recluse—Tenosique—Excessive heat—Rapids of the Usumasinta—Boca del Cerro—Unconquered Indians—The great river—Sickness—Departure for Peten—Reflections on the country and its inhabitants..... 15[illegible]

V.

THE FOREST.

The mystery surrounding Peten—Departure from Tenosique—*Arrieros*—Absence of roads—Perils of the saddle—Thorns and their torments—Encampment—Regularity of the seasons—Festival of Saint Isidore—Indian customs—The commissariat—Cannibalism—A character—Don Diego de la Cueva—His adventures, and how he came to be in Tenosique—The forest—Variety of vegetation—Vines and their peculiarities—Palm trees—Insignificance of man before the grandeur of nature—Reflections—The *aristolochia grandiflora*—Multitudes of *coleoptera*—*Paso del Monte*—Torrent of Yalchilan—Drouth of the country—Dolores—Emergence from the forest—Savannas—A nameless lake—Sacluc—Aspect of the country—Vanilla—Lake of Itza—Town of Flores—Reported death of Don Diego..... 167

VI.

PETEN.

The Itzaes of Peten—An historical episode—Visit of Cortez—Reduction of the Itzaes—Destruction of the aboriginal temples and idols—Change of name—Illness—Good-natured officials—Medical experiences—The pedagogue of Flores—A school of practical natural history—Grand hunt for beasts and birds—Discovery of a new variety of the crocodile—A night adventure with the reptile—Convalescence—Picturesque views—The Island of Peten—Town of Flores—Houses of the inhabitants—Lack of commerce—General poverty—Arcadian simplicity—The evening *tertulia* Costume—Music—A formal ball—A model padre—The *Marimba*—Specimens of native music—The seclusion of Flores—Origin of its name—Hospitality—Death of a stranger—Voyage on the lake—Beautiful shores—A sugar mill or *trapeche*—Indian towns and their inhabitants—Extent of the lake—Its aboriginal name—Fishes—Cave of Jobitsinal—Topography of the district—Its political relations—Soil and productions—Ancient prosperity—Communications with Yucatan, etc.—Geographical ignorance—Belize—Utter isolation of the country—Navigable rivers—Climate—Maladies—General ignorance—Food—Population—Wild beasts—Deer—Tapirs—Rabbits—*Geomys mexicana*—Birds—Reptiles—Fishes again—Freaks of nature under the tropics—Insects—The *nigua*—Antiquities—Lake Yax-Haa—Ruins on its islands—Terra-cottas—Mythical cities—Preparations for departure..... 19[illegible]

VII.

THE HILLS.

PAGE

Departure from Flores—The gift of the corregidor—In the saddle once more—The Savannas—*Juntecchol*—Voices of the night—Morning mists—Early reminiscences—*El Julek*—The corrosol palm—King of the forest—Rancho of *Chal*—Wayfarers—River San Juan—Hacienda of *Yuæ-hé*—Aspect of the country—Division of the waters—Lack of historical interest in the country—Among the hills—The calabash—Detestable roads—Mahogany trees—*Tierra fria*—Town of Dolores—Historical episode—Pine forests—Peculiar climate of Dolores—Temperature—Fishes and reptiles—Singularities of the Indians—Their love of seclusion—Fruits—The *avocate*, or alligator pear—The *flora de la calentura*—Scarcity of food—The traveller's fare—Mules and their intelligence—More magnificent palms—Parasitic plants—River Machaquilan—Change in the aspect of the country—Great pines—Town of *Poptun*—Storm—More bad roads—San Luis—The "governor"—The Indians—Their aversion to agriculture—Excellent cacao—Annual religion—Justice in *deshabille*—Indian oratory—Conchological achievements—Venomous reptiles—Rattlesnakes—Lizards—A shock to popular prejudices..... 247

VIII.

ADVENTURE IN THE FOREST.

Indian porters—How they are secured—A drunken revel—Departure from San Luis—Order of march—Arrangements for the night—Our Indian guides—Their character and habits—Character of the country—Night in the forest—Bad roads—Remarkable vegetation—Rio Santa Isabel—The peccary—Native provisions for travel—Costume for wet weather—Sagacity of the boa—The wood partridge—Rancho of *Chichac*—Native physicians—Primitive lancets—Gloomy forests—Absence of life—Footprints of the Lacandones—Night in a cavern—Dry bed of a lake—Station of *Campamac*—Difficult ascents—Rio *Chimuchuch*—Natural bridge—An encounter—Sinister visitors—Apprehensions—Desertion of guides—Consultations—The interpreter found—Diplomacy—Recovery of guides—Rejoicings—Resumption of journey—The summit of *Leagua*—Magnificent prospect—Distant view of Cahabon—Descent into the plain—Town of Cahabon—The cura—Housed in the convent.... 281

IX.

THE CAVERN.

Cahabon—Picturesque views—Climate—Character of the people—Language—Physical traits—Costume—Marriage customs—The foundation of Cahabon—Zeal of the early missionaries—Organization of the Christianized towns—Policy of the Dominicans—Restraints of their code—Retrogression of the Indians—Decline in numbers—The mechanic arts—Lack of commerce—The cura Balduini—Departure for *Lanquin*—Character of the intervening country—Alpine scenery—Grand reception—Lanquin, its people and their peculiarities—Remarkable cavern—*El Dueño de la Cueva*—Nature's laboratory—Human relics—Indian superstitions—Sierra of Lanquin—Farewells!—Resumption of journey to Coban..... 307

X.

LA TIERRA TEMPLADA.

PAGE

Review of Route—The table lands—Vast maize fields—Difficulties of the road—Public *ranchos*—Travellers' offerings—Fondness of the Indians for fermented drinks—Improved condition of the country—San Pedro Carcha—First view of Coban—Beautiful approach—Liquid amber trees—Delightful climate—Productions—Plaza of Coban—An embowered city—Hedge-rows—Population—Character of the people—Industry and the arts—Costumes—Castes—The *Ladinos*—Pleasing reminiscences—An El Dorado for Naturalists—Birds—The imperial *quetzal*—Traditions concerning it—Shells—Significant Indian names—The chase—New aspects of the forest—Tree ferns—Hunting the *quetzal*—Monkeys—Mountains—Distant volcanoes—Magnificent view—Health of Coban—Fruits and vegetables—The bananna—Coffee—Commerce of Coban—The wilds of Chisec—Refugee Indians—The Bishop Las Casas—*Tierra de Guerra*—Reduction of the country—Change in its name—Foundation of Coban—Arms of the city—Teachings of its founders—Religious reminiscences—The great church—Negro *santos*—Church of Calvario—Confidences—A sentimental episode—*Juana*—Growth of an attachment—An illusion dispelled—Abrupt departure from Coban—Juana's epistle..... 325

XI.

THE CORDILLERAS.

Route from Coban to Guatemala—Difficulties of a start—Meteorological phenomena—Town of Santa Cruz—Flowers—Town of Taltick—*Tierra helada*—The Doña Ana Guzman—A Taltick school and schoolmaster—Scanty fare—Sybaritic beds—Valley of *Patal*—Santa Rosa—Mountain roads—Salama—A *fiesta*—Sugar estate and refinery—A deserter—A caravansary—Work and wages—Armed travellers—Rare plants—*Solfatares*—Hot springs—A precocious child—Motagua river—Suspension bridge—Pendant mosses—Storm and suffering—Glimpse of Guatemala—Fording rivers—Chinauta—Ascent of the plateau of Guatemala—Entrance into the city—Gloomy prospects—A good Samaritan—New use for a table cover..... 355

XII.

GUATEMALA.

Rain—Out again—Disappointed emigrants—View of plateau and city—Giant volcanoes—Dangerous fort—Dreariness of the environs—Streets of the city—The grand *plaza*—Public buildings—Great fountain—The cathedral—Its treasures—Sculptures—Indigenous school of art—Paintings—Church of Santo Domingo—La Merced—San Francisco—Hospital—The cemetery—Strange burial ceremonies—Reminiscences of Spain—University of San Carlos—Ancient books—The Fray Ximenes—Mythical Academy of Natural History—The Economical Society—Gloomy aspect of the city—Its flora—The curse of bells—Habits of the people—*Serenos*—Indian women—Carrera—The public market—The massacre of 1840—The plateau of Guatemala—Absence of water—Aqueducts—Irrigation—Building materials—Plan of dwellings—Rude furniture—Gardens—Horticulture—Uniformity in mode of life—Absence of social enjoyments—Traits of the better classes—The women—Religious ceremonies—Food and meals—Cereals—The *agave americana*—*Pulque*—Costume—Theatre—Lack of hotels—*Mesones*—Education—General demoralization—The mechanical arts—Interior commerce—Foreign trade—Political condition—Rafael Carrera—His origin—Rise to power—Character—Parallel with Rosas—Not quite a presentation—The army—Visit to the Pacific—Morin—Conclusion..... 379

INTRODUCTION.

WHOEVER glances at the map of Central America will observe a vast region, lying between Chiapas, Tabasco, Yucatan, and the Republic of Guatemala, and comprising a considerable part of each of those States, which, if not entirely a blank, is only conjecturally filled up with mountains, lakes, and rivers. It is almost as unknown as the interior of Africa itself. We only know that it is traversed by nameless ranges of mountains, among which the great river Usumasinta gathers its waters from a thousand tributaries, before pouring them, in a mighty flood, into the Lagoon of Terminos, and the Gulf of Mexico. We know that it has vast plains alternating with forests and savannas; deep valleys where tropical nature takes her most luxuriant forms, and high plateaus dark with pines, or covered with the delicate tracery of arborescent ferns. We know that it conceals broad and beautiful lakes, peopled with fishes of new varieties, and studded with islands which support the crumbling yet still imposing remains of aboriginal architecture and superstition. And we know, also, that the remnants of the ancient Itzaes, Lacandones, Choles, and Manches, those indomitable Indian families who successfully resisted the force of the Spanish arms, still find a shelter in its fastnesses, where they maintain their independence, and preserve and practise the rites and habits of their ancestors as they existed before the Discovery. Within its depths, far off on some unknown tributary of the Usumasinta, the popular tradition of Guatemala

and Chiapas places that great aboriginal city, with its white walls shining like silver in the sun, which the cura of Quiché affirmed to Mr. Stephens he had seen, with his own eyes, from the tops of the mountains of Quesaltenango.

It is a region, therefore, of singular interest, appealing equally to the geographer, the student of natural history, the antiquary and the ethnologist. And lying, moreover, almost at our own doors, rich in its resources and tempting in its natural wealth, it must soon appeal to that restless spirit of enterprise and commercial activity which, not content with its past triumphs, longs for new conquests and a wider field of exercise.

It is true that Cortez traversed a great part of this vast region in his adventurous march from Mexico into Honduras. For nearly two years he struggled among its deep morasses and almost impassable rivers, through its untracked wildernesses and over its high and desert mountains, with almost superhuman courage and endurance. But his brief letter to the King of Spain, giving an account of his adventures, affords us only a faint notion of the country, and no very clear ideas of its people. He reached the mysterious Lake of the Itzaes, and left there his wounded horse, the image of which, nearly two centuries later, the Spaniards found elevated to the rank of a god, and invested with the powers which control the thunder and the lightning. It was into this region, called by the ominous name of *Tierra de Guerra*, the Land of War, that the pious and devoted Las Casas, when the arms of Spain had failed, endeavored, but with imperfect success, to carry the symbol of the cross. Many an enthusiastic missionary found among its implacable inhabitants the crown of martyrdom. In vain did the Church seek to bring it under the shadow of the faith, and plant the cross on its savage mountains. Equally in vain did the royal cedulas urge on the Audiencia of Guatemala and the Governors of Yucatan the necessity of reducing it under the real as well as the nom

inal authority of the crown. Expedition after expedition was fitted out in accordance with the imperial mandate, only to be utterly cut off or driven back in disaster and dismay. Nor was it until near the close of the seventeenth century, in 1698, that the combined forces of the surrounding provinces were able to reduce the famous stronghold of the Itzaes in Peten, and break down the temples in which, until then, the religious rites of the people who built the massive structures of Uxmal and Chichen-itza had been kept up in all their primitive pomp and significance. The history of this reduction was written by the chronicler Villagutierre with all the minute detail, and in the spirit of Froissart and the historians of the Middle Ages; but it only exists in parchment cerements, and under the seal of a strange tongue, in the libraries of the curious and the learned. But since he wrote, down to the present day, neither historian nor traveller, priest nor soldier, have ventured into the sinister region which resisted with equal success the power of the Spanish arms and the still more formidable influences of the Catholic faith. The little knowledge once possessed of the country has been lost; the very names of its people, once the terror of the adjacent colonies, have almost passed from the memory of the present generation, and the Spanish establishments themselves, which the genius of Ursua pushed forward into the disputed territory, have been left to almost utter isolation and forgetfulness.

Occasional references to the country, in books of travel, or in the transactions of learned societies, which have served rather to show how small is our knowledge, than to add to our information, are all that has been presented to the world concerning it, since the days of Cortez and Ursua.* M. Waldeck skirted it in the

* Very soon after the independence of the Spanish American colonies, and before the exact relations of the several territories became established,

directions of Tabasco and Yucatan, and Mr. Stephens on the side of Guatemala, but neither ventured into its interior. They heard fearful accounts of the ferocity of its incommunicative inhabitants, and have repeated to us the tragical stories connected with the fate of the few daring adventurers whom tradition reports as having undertaken to solve the mystery of its fastnesses. Even in Guatemala itself, within the nominal jurisdiction of which the greater part of the unknown country in question is included, only the vaguest notions exist of the remote district of Peten, and of the great Lake of Itza, on an island of which, and on the site of the metropolis of the Itzaes, Ursua founded a town which is now a political dependency of the republic. Separated by one hundred and fifty-six leagues of distance, involving a journey of twenty-nine days, ten of which are through an unbroken wilderness which can only be traversed on foot, across rivers frequently unfordable, and wide tracts of country often inundated, and over mountains so steep, that in some places they can only be ascended

Mexico disputed the political jurisdiction of Peten with Guatemala, and sent thither a commissioner, Don Domingo Fajardo, who penetrated to its frontier from the direction of Campeachy. He was unsuccessful in his mission, and on his return published a report to his government, entitled *Informe de Senor Don Domingo Fajardo, dirigido al Goberno Supremo de Mejico: Campeachy*, 1828. This report, however, contains but little concerning the country. Some years later, the district was visited by Colonel Juan Galindo, an officer of the old republic of Central America, who wrote a letter from the town of Flores, giving a brief account of the river Usumasinta, with some remarks on the Indians living on its banks. It was published in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, vol. iii., pp. 56–64. A subsequent letter, from Colonel Galindo, dated from Palenque, and published in the *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Paris*, for the year 1832, p. 198, gives an account of some of the ancient monuments of the district of Peten which fell under his notice; but neither this nor his previous letter from Flores, gives us any clear or satisfactory information concerning the country. To these sketches, it only remains to add the Memoir of the Fray Alonzo de Escobar, reproduced in the Appendix to this volume, in order to exhaust the limited bibliography of the subject.

by rude ladders formed by notching the trunks of forest trees, and placing them against the declivities, to say nothing of the total absence of shelter and provisions, and the danger of attack from hostile Indians—in view of these circumstances, it is not surprising that even that part of the country which is under a qualified Spanish authority, is in all essential respects a *terra incognita*, and has so long escaped the explorations of travellers.

How long it would have remained a *terra incognita*, had its exploration and illustration depended exclusively on the people and governments of the surrounding States, it is not worth while to inquire. The darkness which enshrouded it would probably have been permitted to thicken and become more and more profound, had not the author of the following volume crossed the Atlantic, and plunging boldly into its recesses, brought it, with its physical characteristics, its quaint people, and its natural history, within the circle of modern knowledge, and under the light of modern intelligence.

Within a few years M. Arthur Morelet, a French gentleman of leisure and extensive scientific acquirements, conceived the idea of exploring this secluded and unknown region. His project was encouraged by the Institute, and was successfully accomplished. He next paid a visit to Gautemala, and returned to France with a most extensive and valuable collection of objects and specimens, in every branch of natural history, and with abundant notes on the country and its people. His collection was deposited in the Museum of Paris, and was found to be made up of many new and rare varieties of animals, reptiles, insects, and plants, which were described in the *Comte Rendu* of the Institute, and in the various scientific publications of the day. But his geographical observations, and the information which he had collected in his travels, on subjects of more general and popular interest, were allowed to remain locked up in his own mind and in the notes of

his explorations, until, recently, he was prevailed upon to present them to the world. But even then his modesty of character led him to prefer a private publication to a public issue, whence it has resulted that in France itself, his work, entitled, "VOYAGE DANS L'AMERIQUE CENTRALE, L'ILE DE CUBA, ET L'YUCATAN," in two volumes of 337 and 330 pages respectively, is little known beyond the circle of his individual acquaintances and personal friends. Yet it is far too varied and important, and has too clear an appeal to American interests, to be allowed to remain in the comparative obscurity to which the mistaken delicacy of its author would condemn it. In presenting the work, however, in an English translation, it should be explained that the chapters containing an account of M. Morelet's voyage across the Atlantic, and his tour through the island of Cuba, have been omitted, as of subordinate interest and importance. His narrative is taken up from the point where, departing from Campeachy, he really entered on untrodden ground, and commenced the series of original explorations recounted in this volume, which are second in extent and value to none that have been carried out through individual enterprise, on this continent, during the present century.

They cover the vast delta of the Usumasinta, extending to the ruins of Palenque on the west, and thence eastward to the singular terrestrial basin of the mysterious Lake of Itza or Peten. From this centre they were extended southward, through a vast wilderness, and the hitherto untraversed and undescribed province of Vera Paz, to the city of Guatemala—comprising altogether a journey of upwards of three hundred leagues, in considerable part performed on foot, and under difficulties and exposures of a formidable character. In conjunction with the explorations of Messrs. Waldeck and Stephens in Chiapa and Yucatan, and of other later investigators to the southward, in Honduras, San Sal-

vador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica,* those of M. Morelet were necessary to a complete view of Central America, using that designation in a geographical sense, as including that portion of the continent lying between the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and that of Darien. We have now a very good general knowledge of this important and interesting region taken as a whole, and a very accurate and detailed account of many of its parts, and it cannot be doubted that the share which M. Morelet has taken in its exploration and illustration, will meet with that recognition and credit, on this side of the Atlantic, due to his zeal and intelligence.

E. GEO. SQUIER.

NEW YORK, January, 1871.

* The titles of the principal works referred to here are as follows:

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4.—Nicaragua; Its People, Scenery, Monuments, and Proposed Interoceanic Canal, by E. G. Squier. 2 vols. New York, 1852.

5.—History of Yucatan from its discovery to the close of seventeenth century, by C. St. John Fancourt. London, 1854.

6.—Die Republik Costa Rica in Central Amerika, etc., von Dr. Moritz Wagner und Dr. Carl Scherzer. Leipzig, 1856.

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15
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TRAVELS IN CENTRAL AMERICA.

I.

THE LAGOONS.

Campeachy—Surrounding Scenery—Fruits and Flowers—*Casones*—Currency—Insect pests—Antiquities—Physical features of Yucatan—*Acalan*—Population—Social animosities—Preparation for departure—The Mediterranean of the New World—Primitive Navigation—*Canoas* and *Cayucos*—Embarkation—Waiting for a Padre—Disappointment—Off at last—*El Morro*—Roadstead of *Ceiba*—Priestly pastimes—The father and his flock—Champoton—Reminiscences of the Conquest—Island of Carmen—Sterility of the soil—Character of the people—The town of Carmen—Picturesque suburbs—The *manzanilla*—Vegetable wealth—Misplaced melodies—Climate of Carmen—Aboriginal relics—Night thoughts—Lagoon of Terminos—Hydrography of the country—The river Usumasinta—Fishes—Start for the interior—Scorpions—Entomology on a large scale—Sunset—*Boca Chica*—A maze of waters—Gigantic forests—Storm—River navigation—Animated nature—*Isla de Pajaros*—A Mosquito Malakoff—*Rio Viejo*—Retrospects—Palizada—Spanish American hospitality—Origin of the town—Its trade—Inhabitants—Surrounding swamps and their inmates—The *jacana*—Logwood cutting and peonage—Mangos—Palma real—Varieties of fish and turtles—Rattlesnakes—The deadly *nahuyaca*.

NEXT to Merida, Campeachy is the principal city of Yucatan. As a town it has nothing remarkable to distinguish it, except perhaps the triple line of crenated walls by which it is surrounded. Its principal square is simply ugly, its cathedral is mean, and it is without a single monument worthy of the attention of the traveller. But it is pervaded throughout by a spirit of order and repose which contrasts strongly and favorably with the ostentatious negligence of cities like Havana. Nature, furthermore, has given it a position unsurpassed in riant beauty by that of any other city of tropical America. Nothing can be more charming than its environs, where a population of ten thousand souls are dispersed beneath the shad-

ows of a magnificent vegetation, which extends from the shore, studded with palms, back to the amphitheatre of green hills which circles round the inland horizon. From the heights of *la Eminencia*, whence the Mexican artillery cannonaded the city in 1843, one may form a very clear idea of the place and its surroundings; but to comprehend fully its natural beauties of position, it is necessary to climb the hill of San Francisco at sunset. From this point, the whole plain is mapped out before the delighted spectator, whose eye traverses a panorama of white houses, cultivated fields, and emerald verdure, terminated by the blue rim of the Gulf, against which the towers of the town and its indented walls stand out with surprising sharpness. From here also, may be traced all the windings of the river San Francisco, to which geographers have given an imaginary importance, and which they have wrongly placed to the westward of the town.*

* M. Waldeck, who visited Campeachy in 1835, mentions a curious fact connected with the city which seems to have escaped the notice of other travellers. It is that the calcarious rock which underlies it was mined by the ancient inhabitants, in every direction, so that the entire town stands over a series of subterranean vaults, something like those under Paris, on the left bank of the Seine. "It is difficult to say," continues M. Waldeck, "if these ancient quarries or galleries were what tradition represents, the abodes of the people by whom they were excavated. Certain it is, they bear no marks of smoke nor other evidences of occupation by man. What seems most probable is, that, at least in some of their parts, they were catacombs or depositories of the dead. I was supported in this supposition by observing a number of horizontal openings in the walls of the various chambers, seven feet in depth, and about twenty inches in diameter, which seem to have been designed for the reception of the dead. The inhabitants of Campeachy themselves do not know the extent and windings of these gloomy galleries, the roofs of which often break through, occasioning serious damage. Such an occurrence took place but a short time previous to my visit, in the middle of the street *del Moille*. Fortunately the gallery which fell in, did not extend under the neighboring houses, so that the damage was not great."—(*Voyage dans l'Yucatan*, p. 10.) In another place, M. Waldeck mentions that good water is not to be obtained in Campeachy, except from cisterns in which it is collected during the season of the rains. This circumstance, taken in connection with the well-known fact that the ancient inhabitants of Yucatan often constructed

Near the gate of Santa Ana is a fine promenade, lined with orange trees which are attended to with a degree of care hardly to be looked for in a place surrounded by so many natural walks of greatest beauty. The cultivation of fruits and flowers, however, is by no means common. They are left to the unaided production of nature, who lavishes them, at certain periods of the year, in boundless profusion. But I was unfortunate in the time of my visit, and found but few flowers of interest or beauty in bloom. Among these, however, studding the hedges, were the fibrous *cleomeæ*, and along the beach the *anthemis*, with its fragrant leaves, the square-stalked thistle, and a kind of cactus, the *pitaya*, which climbs the trunks of adjacent trees, and suspends its flowers and fruits from their branches—the most beautiful, and in fruit the most luscious, among all the numerous varieties of this plant; and finally the Mexican poppy, a kind of *papaveraceæ* peculiar to the tropics, suspending its golden petals in the streets of the city. Among the fruits most abundant were the *caimito* and the *anona*, both of which were new to me. The first named is round, of the size of an apple, with a smooth skin of a violet color, red pulp, and a taste like that of the strawberry. The tree which produces it (*chrys. ophillum* of Jacq.) is distinguished by its leaves, which are of lustrous green on their upper, and rusty brown on their inferior surfaces. The anona (*a. muricata*, L.) belongs to a numerous family of delicious fruits which abound under the tropics, and which have no analogy with any of those of our climates. The kind to which I now refer, from its form and color, has received in the French colonies the name of *cœur de bœuf*, or ox-heart. The rind is thin, covering a white, unctuous pulp of a peculiar but delicious taste, which leaves on the palate a flavor of perfumed cream.

vast subterranean reservoirs, or *senotes*, for water, may throw some light on the origin and purposes of the excavations under the city.—*T.*

We found in Campeachy a passable inn. Its fare was the best which the country afforded; but, on the very first day, my suspicions were aroused as to the nature of a certain dish which occupied a conspicuous place on the table, and which the cook said was the flesh of the *cazon*. Further than this, he was not inclined to be communicative. The same afternoon, however, as I strolled along the beach, I observed a fisherman towing behind his boat some variety of sea monster which I almost instinctively connected with the suspicious dish at the inn. "Pray tell me," I inquired, "what fishes are those?" The man looked up in astonishment, and when I reiterated the question, replied, "Why, do n't you see that they are *cazones?*" "Hold, my friend," I interrupted, "your *cazones* are veritable sharks!" But my fisherman was in no degree surprised at the announcement; he only shrugged his shoulders, ejaculated "*como no?*"—why not?—and went on with his work. I was not long in finding out that sharks of all kinds and colors constitute a prime article of food in Campeachy, where they are eaten fresh and salt, roast, fried, and stewed, in all forms and on all occasions. And to avoid exciting alarm or shocking a prejudice which strangers may have in regard to them, the word *tiburon*, which is the true Spanish for shark, has been banished from the gastronomic vocabulary of the good people of Campeachy! I subsequently visited the public square, and there, among the fruits and fowls and vegetables offered for sale by long files of Indian women seated on the ground, I still found the inevitable *cazon*, the monarch of the market! He should be emblazoned on the arms of the city.

In the larger part of Spanish America the smallest coin is the *medio*, equal to about six cents. But in Campeachy, where silver is scarce and relatively of greater value, the *medio* is not sufficiently small to meet the wants of petty trade. So they cut it in halves and quarters, the first called *cuartillos*,

and the latter *chicas*. After the *chicas*, the grains of the cacao come in to balance exchanges, in the proportion of from 80 to 160 grains to the *medio*, according to the crop—five grains being the lowest expression of the monetary system.

The climate of Campeachy is hot, and during the rainy season insalubrious, the principal complaints being intermittent fevers, and occasionally the terrible *vomito* or yellow fever. Both town and country are furthermore infested by insects, which multiply prodigiously under the combined influences of heat and humidity. Roaches, scorpions, centipedes, and mosquitos throng everywhere; the latter especially in such numbers, as to render many parts of the coast absolutely uninhabitable. The forests too, are full of a variety of ticks (*ixodes*) called *garrapatas*, which bury their heads and claws under the skin so deeply as to render their removal impossible, without leaving some portion of their body behind to fret and fester in the flesh. On their native bushes they are thin and meagre in the extreme, not nearly as thick as a grain of flax seed, but when they fasten themselves on men or animals, they soon fill themselves up with blood, and become round as a bead, with only little projections in the place of feet, and another scarcely perceptible projection indicating their mouth. Then they are helpless as drunken gluttons, and fall an easy prey to the first barn-yard fowl that comes along. They can not endure tobacco, and if the exposed parts of the person be washed with an infusion of the plant, their attacks may pretty certainly be prevented. Alcohol has nearly the same effect in keeping them off, or in detaching them after they have fastened on the body.*

There existed in Campeachy, at the time of my visit, a

* This enumeration of the reptiles and insects which infest Campeachy, quite justifies the native name of the country, which, according to Waldeck, is derived from the Maya *can* or *cam*, serpent, and *petche*, garapata.—*T.*

valuable collection of American antiquities, got together by two intelligent priests, the brothers Comacho. Among the interesting specimens which it contained, were many earthen figures and vases, still retaining traces of paint and varnish, instruments of music, numerous articles of ornament, axes and lance heads in silex and obsidian, etc., etc. An examination of these articles convinced me that the plastic art and skill in design, among the ancient people of Yucatan, were much in arrear, even at the time when architecture had reached a remarkable degree of development. The most interesting article in the collection, and one considered by the Campeachy archæologists as commemorating an actual event, was a group in terra-cotta, representing a man, naked with the exception of a cincture around his loins, holding in one hand a cord bound around the arms of another figure, apparently that of a criminal, who kneels before him in an attitude of resignation, while in his other upraised hand, he holds an axe or sword, edged with flints, as if about to strike. Besides these, there are two other figures; one that of a magistrate or judge, easily recognized by his various insignia of office, and the other a young girl, who does not appear to have reached the age of puberty. As it is well known that in Yucatan, as also in Mexico, the aboriginal law punished with death any forcible attempt against young virgins, it is not difficult to divine the significance of the group. The figures are in red clay, well burned, and of tolerable workmanship. This interesting relic was found in a tomb, at some distance in the interior, by the side of a skeleton, of which I saw the skull. It had a notch near its base, which it may be supposed was made in the act of decapitation.

But among the objects to which the pious brothers more especially directed my attention, were some arrows which had pierced an English traveller, who had undertaken to journey overland to Peten. They were still marked with his blood.

I afterward learned that the name of the unfortunate man was Brown, and that his murderers were not the ferocious Indians who figured in the legend told about him in Campeachy, but two Spaniards of Tabasco, who, to obtain possession of a diamond of which they believed him to be the possessor, waylaid him in the forest, and killed him with arrows, in order to divert suspicion. They found no diamond, but only a small sum of money, which they hid at the foot of a tree, whence it was taken by a third bandit, who had watched their movements. I encountered the assassins at Palizada, where they were living undisturbed, engaged in speculations in logwood, notwithstanding that their guilt was well known to the authorities.

My stay in Yucatan was not sufficiently long, nor my travels in it sufficiently extended, to justify me in saying much about the country or its inhabitants. Although the peninsula occupies a happy position at the entrance of the Mexican Gulf, not far from the great commercial centres of the New World, nature has denied it an essential condition of development and commercial prosperity, namely, good harbors. A single port, that of Laguna, on the island of Carmen, and a single river, the *Usumasinta*, both situated at the extreme western corner of the State, are alone worthy of mention. Yet the one will only admit vessels of light tonnage, and the other barely touches on a distant and almost unknown portion of its territory. The coast bordering on the Gulf is uniformly plain, except on the west, where it is relieved by little *sierras* which only extend into the sea to form shoals, on which the surf beats in an unbroken and almost impassable line. Here the sea is shallow, and the anchorage bad. On the side of the Atlantic the shore is lined with a succession of little islands and reefs, through which approach is equally difficult and dangerous. As a consequence of all these disadvantages, navigation is almost impossible, and commerce is reduced to a petty coasting trade, which barely meets the necessities of the country.

Going inland, we find, as we approach the undefined limits of Guatemala and Tabasco, only a wooded solitude, frequently destitute of water, which separates the peninsula from the body of the continent. It is, nevertheless, in this direction that we must look for the ancient fertile province of *Aca'an*, and the ruins of that industrious city, peopled with merchants, who chose the ablest among themselves for rulers, and who, at the time of the visit of Cortez, extended their traffic to the utmost limits of Central America.*

There still exists, in that direction, a road or trail leading to Peten, through a labyrinth of gigantic forests, but as it terminates in a poor country, with a scant population, utterly isolated from the world, it confers no benefit on Yucatan. Yet in spite of all these deficiencies, the State, under a wise government, has, until lately, maintained a respectable position in the Mexican confederation; but now it seems as if internal discord and a war of castes may soon reduce it to the miserable condition of its unfortunate sisters.

In ancient times, when the population was much larger than now, it was very equably diffused over the country; but since the conquest it has gradually concentrated on the side of the Gulf, notwithstanding that the soil in that direction is poorest and the country generally possessed of fewer resources. This has probably resulted, less from calculation or predilection, than from the ancient restrictions on commerce, inducing a system of contrabandage, for which this coast is most favorable. The country may therefore be divided into two districts, of unequal populations, separated from each other by a chain of hills which commences at the little bay of Champoton, and extends obliquely across the peninsula to Sal-

* The commerce of *Acalan*, according to the early chroniclers, consisted in cotton, cacao, slaves, shells, resins and perfumes to be burnt in the temples, fat pine to be burnt for light, colors and dyes for use in festivals and in war, etc., etc.

amanca, where it terminates. We know but little of the terrestrial basin of Peten, but we know that to the east of it the country is better watered, less stony and more fertile. In the direction of Tabasco the country becomes level, and as we approach the Lagoon of Terminos assumes a new and peculiar character. Here it is only a wide alluvion, traversed by numerous rivers, and interspersed with marshes, entitling it to the designation of the Delta of Yucatan. This delta is full of precious woods, which gave their name to the town of Campeachy, once the principal *entrepôt* of the logwood trade, as is attested by the story of the fillibuster Grandmont, who, in 1684, after surprising the place, burnt more than a million logs of the wood which he found there, as a grand bonfire in honor of St. Louis! The subsequent establishment of the port of Laguna, on the island of Carmen, deprived Campeachy of this traffic, which is now almost exclusively carried on through the Lagoon of Terminos.

Except within the narrow limits which I have indicated, Yucatan is dry and sterile; so much so that the aborigines were obliged to profit by the cavernous nature of the country for their supply of water, which, disappearing rapidly from the surface, was collected in vast subterranean reservoirs called *senotes*. Without this natural and providential provision, the country would have been uninhabitable. The *senotes*, however, are not always wholly natural. Many have been vastly extended, if indeed they were not entirely excavated by man. That of *Bolonchen*, for example, astonishes us with its vastness, and the great extent and complication of its galleries. The Spaniards have in no respect equalled the great public works of utility of their predecessors.

The census of 1846 gives 546,000 as the population of the peninsula, aside from a large number of nomads who fled from the registration, estimated at from 30,000 to 40,000. This is only about twelve inhabitants to the square mile. Most

of these are Indians, who, notwithstanding three centuries of contact with their conquerors, still maintain their blood pure. They constitute the entire laboring population of the country; trade and most of the mechanical arts being in the hands of foreigners, (chiefly European Spaniards), and the Creoles. A deep antipathy exists between these two classes, and is equally strong if not as demonstrative between the Indians and the whole race of foreigners and mixed bloods.*

To return to myself and my voyage. It was now the early part of March, and the mean range of the thermometer was from 82° to 84° of Fahrenheit; often reaching 98° during the day. The sun shone down from a brazen sky, and the reflection of its rays from the burning stones of the streets, and the white walls of the city, became insupportable. Furthermore, I began to experience the pernicious influence of the climate; my limbs were oppressed with indescribable languor; my appetite diminished, and a feverish tendency was manifested in every part of my system. These symptoms would have roused me to movement, even if my interests and feelings had been averse. But all combined to hasten my departure. As Campeachy was the last point where I could hope to obtain conveniences for my expedition, I improved my time in making such preparations as my experience suggested were necessary. I exchanged my trunks for two boxes of equal size and weight, which, slung the first on one side and the second on the other, would make a fair load for a mule. I next abandoned every article, whether of clothing or conveni-

* Since M. Morelet traveled in Yucatan, these antipathies have broken out in hostilities and a bloody and unrelenting war of castes, which have resulted in the establishment of a *de facto* aboriginal authority over the whole country except the large towns and sea-ports. Here the Creole population have thus far maintained themselves, but the advance of the Indians is constant, and unless checked by foreign intervention must soon result in their absolute ascendancy and the total destruction of all the inhabitants of Spanish or mixed blood.—*T.*

ence, not absolutely necessary; I bought a hammock, purchased drugs and consulted doctors; and sending Morin (whom it is time I should introduce to the reader, as a Frenchman born, half sailor, half valet, with the advantage of two years' experience in these countries) to secure a passage in the first craft that floated for Carmen—I say, having done all this, I formally called on my friends and bade them adieu, and then returned to my inn, to feast on *cazones*, and await the result of Morin's mission.

The Gulf of Mexico, the Mediterranean of the New World, is exposed for six months of the year, from the autumnal to the vernal equinox, to violent storms, and is beset with dangers. During the same interval, on the other hand, the coast is inviting and salubrious. But when the north winds cease, at the beginning of the rainy season, and the sun blazes down on the land in the plenitude of its strength, a rapid fermentation of the soil commences, especially in the vicinity of the forests, evolving gases equally oppressive to the senses and deleterious to health. An invisible poison fills the air, and then, however serene the sky, or beautiful the country may appear, the stranger should avoid these tempting shores, until the cold winds from the north have checked decomposition and purified the atmosphere.

Communication between the different ports of the Spanish coast washed by this inland sea, is by no means frequent or regular. During the best season of the year, it is hazardous coasting along its shores; and the voyager, in sailing from cape to cape, and harbor to harbor, has to pursue a cautious and circuitous course. The little boats, used in this timorous navigation, still bear the Indian name of *canoas*. They are seldom of more than thirty or forty tons burthen, rarely have decks, and are rigged in truly primitive style, with lateen sails. On the rivers, the *cayuco* is most in use. It is a kind of rude *canoa*, hollowed from a single log, and is more frequently

propelled by poles and paddles than by sails.* These frail vessels constitute the entire domestic marine of the country, and notwithstanding the caution with which they are navigated, they are far from safe. The natives never embark in them when the weather is threatening, and when surprised by a storm, they fly from it like frightened sea-gulls, and seek shelter in the mouth of some creek or river, or in some one of the numerous little bays with which the shore is indented. In this hesitating and fragmentary manner, the traveller may coast along the continent from Punta de Salinas, the eastern extremity of Yucatan, by way of Sisal, Campeachy, Champoton, Carmen, Coatzacoalcos, and Alvarado, to Vera Cruz. But he will find it by no means an excursion of pleasure.

As I have said, Morin kept watch on the maritime movements of Campeachy, and finally succeeded in finding a boat ready to sail for Laguna on the island of Carmen, in which I at once engaged passage. I should have preferred an inland journey, as one likely to have a greater scientific interest; but apart from its difficulty, not to say danger, it would have required a larger expenditure of time than I had at my command. So I determined to proceed by water.

The sky was clouded when we embarked, and Morin predicted bad weather, but our apprehensions were soothed by seeing other boats leaving the port as usual, favored by a breeze from the north-east, which rippled the surface of the water, rarely rough before Campeachy, owing to the bar outside which effectually breaks the force of the waves. We were fully an hour in launching our crazy bark and getting up our primitive sail. The little scene greatly amused my acquaintances, who watched our movements from the mole, whence they waved their adieus and wishes for a pleasant voy-

* The woods of which these are usually constructed are the cedar, mahogany, and *ceiba*. I may remark here, as a singular coincidence, the analogy between the Maya *cayuco*, and the Turkish *caiaque*.

age. Although we were really strangers, without knowledge of each other's history or purposes in life, I nevertheless felt, in parting from them, as if I were leaving old and trusted friends.*

The padre of Carmen had taken passage in our *canoa;* but the padre lingered among the good things of Campeachy, and was in no hurry to get away. So we were obliged to lie off, a cable's length from the shore, idly waiting for his arrival. Meantime the night came on, dark and threatening, and big

* M. Waldeck, apparently not as fortunate as our author in his Campeachy acquaintanceships, is emphatic in his characterization of the manners and morals of the people, which, he says, "are as loose as in most other parts of Spanish America, where the priests have naturalized libertinage." He adduces also, as an evidence of the indelibility of the past practices of the Indians, and of present intellectual barbarism, that during his stay he was one night roused from sleep by an outrageous clamor, the firing of guns, the ringing of bells, the shouts of men, and the barking of dogs, the occasion of all being, not the sudden attack of an enemy as he had at first supposed, but a simple eclipse of the moon! "The ancient Mexicans believed that the phenomenon of an eclipse was occasioned by one of the heavenly bodies devouring either the sun or moon, as the case might be; and in order to frighten the aggressor from his prey they raised violent shouts, beat their dogs to make them howl, and shot their arrows in the air, in the direction of the suffering luminary. Hence the surname of *Illuicamina* (who shoots his arrows to heaven) given to the first, or *huehue Montezuma.* The spectacle which I witnessed in Campeachy was a simple repetition of this practice; only firearms were used instead of bows and arrows—evidence that the people of to-day have not been wholly without advancement in civilization!"—(*Voyage dans l' Yucatan*, p. 14.) Nor was the mode of celebrating national anniversaries or the memory of the saints less objectionable to M. Waldeck than that of terminating an eclipse. "It is impossible to give an idea of the infernal noise produced by the cannons, bells, muskets, *bombas*, chants of the priests, and shouts of the populace, on the occasion of the festival in honor of St. Francis. It was sufficient to wreck the tympanum of those whose ears had not become accustomed to these abominable *charivaris.* This mode of rejoicing well illustrates the ignorance and barbarism of the people. A nation accustomed to think, does not manifest its joy in this manner. In Europe the mass of the people are content with quiet amusements; but in Mexico the festivals of the saints are not celebrated with prayers, but with the firing of guns; and the holier the saint, the more formidable the rumpus."—*Ib.*, p. 16.

drops of rain fell at intervals, an acknowledged bad indication at this season of the year. The crew became impatient, and notwithstanding their habitual respect for the ecclesiastical gown, I have no doubt heartily wished our padre to the devil. As it was, they relieved themselves by a torrent of promiscuous imprecations, in the midst of which I quietly slipped down into the hold, and adjusting myself as comfortably as possible between the bags of rice which were stowed there, sought escape from all annoyances in slumber. But the heat was suffocating; in a few minutes I was wet with perspiration, and fairly gasping for breath in the close mephitic atmosphere, while a thousand unknown insects flitted against my face, and crawled over my person. It was a disagreeable novitiate, and a sorry promise for the future; but I was forced to submit, or shamefully abandon the enterprise on which I had set out with such high anticipations of pleasure. After a time, which seemed to me to be an age, I heard a hail, and there was a movement as of some person coming on board. When it ceased I felt the boat turn, then lean over on one side, as if bending under a well-filled sail. Directly a wave broke over us, making every timber tremble beneath the blow. I thought our departure under such a state of the sea was rather a dangerous proceeding, but as everything soon became quiet again, and the sound of the waters subsided into a mere murmur, I dismissed all alarm, and gradually fell asleep. At daybreak I was roused by the gruff voice of the *patron*, and the inquiry, "Señor, will you go ashore?" "Have we reached San Filipe, already?" I ejaculated, and scrambled out on deck, in a state of agreeable excitement, without waiting for a reply. What was my surprise and disappointment on seeing before me the familiar mole, the grey walls and the sleepy-looking clock towers of Campeachy! I turned to the patron, and my face must have expressed my chagrin, for he exclaimed in a consolatory tone, "Ah! Señor, we are better

off here this morning than we would have been on the rocks of the *Morro!*" There was no denying that proposition, but the assurance was a poor recompense for my sufferings during that weary night. I need not say that I lost no time in getting off to the mole again, where I encountered the friends from whom I had separated so formally the afternoon before. They received me with a burst of merriment, in which I was fain to join, with the best grace possible under the circumstances.

The storm that had prevented our departure continued for three days. It was however the last of the season; and when it ceased, the azure bosom of the Gulf regained its repose, which it retains for six months, while the sun crosses the equator and advances toward the tropics. And when we finally set sail, the sky wore a look of permanent serenity; the temperature was fresh and bracing; and the crew were gay and noisy under the exhilarations of fine weather and the prospect of a safe and speedy voyage. As we glided out of the harbor, the city with its background of green hills, and the surrounding country full of cocoa groves, and sprinkled over with cottages, mellowed under the morning sun, all combined to form a tropical scene of incomparable softness and beauty. Nor was the harbor itself without its interest. All the fishermen of the city and its neighborhood, profiting by the calm, were out in the bay in pursuit of *cazones*, and a thousand luminous little sails glittered on its blue surface like stars in the firmament.

The coast from Campeachy to the village of Champoton, distant fourteen leagues, presents a succession of steep, wooded hills, the bases of which are hedged with rocks. Among the most remarkable of these is the *Morro*. "Here," said the *patron* of the boat, pointing to the neighboring shores, "vessels are lost, it is true, but the crews sometimes escape; but there," he added, indicating the blue mass of the *Morro*,

"there escape is impossible!" I curiously examined this cape, which we were rapidly approaching, and which juts out in a triple promontory into the sea. It is a bold gray bluff, of sinister aspect, and bald as the head of a vulture. I could distinguish the horizontal stratification of the rocks, seamed vertically with rough rents, and full of irregular cavities. The base, beaten by the surf, disappeared from time to time, under a dazzling sheet of foam. A thick and luxuriant vegetation fills the adjacent gorges, making its bare heights all the more striking from the contrast. This rock is undoubtedly the same which Herrara designates as *Morro de los Diablos*, the Devil's Mountain. Beyond it the coast describes a deep curve, forming a bay with a sandy beach, on which stand a few cane huts. This is the roadstead of *La Ceiba*, the refuge of mariners surprised by bad weather on these rugged shores.

Our breakfast on board the *canoa* consisted of ship's biscuit, shark's flesh seasoned with a dash of vinegar, water, a little glass of rum, and a cigar afterward to assist digestion. This is the usual fare on these boats, and such was ours during our journey. Passengers and sailors all ate from the same dish. A piece of biscuit served each of us as a plate, and thanks to Nature, who has provided us with fingers, the absence of forks was scarcely noticed.

As soon as we had finished our meal, the padre produced cards and proposed *monte*. I excused myself on the score of ignorance; but he found men among the crew ready to join him in the game, which constituted his chief occupation during the voyage. He was a man of somewhat coarse appearance, but of jovial disposition; ignorant as only Mexicans can be, an enemy to care, with but little baggage, and that little chiefly filled up with bottles of Spanish wine. When we reached Carmen, a large portion of the population awaited his arrival on the beach, eager to touch his garments or rever-

ently kiss his hand. During the tumult and confusion incident on this ovation, our padre, who had still one foot on the boat, unfortunately lost his equilibrium, thereby seriously compromising his dignity; but he hit on a sudden and brilliant revenge. Leaping ashore, at once and without uttering a word, he proceeded by means of indiscriminate blows and kicks to teach the people that even zeal has its limits, which cannot be infringed on with impunity. In this paternal and to us exceedingly amusing way, the pastor inaugurated his return, and resumed the spiritual charge of his flock.

From the roadstead of *La Ceiba*, a zone of white sand continues along the shore, and the hills become lower and recede toward the interior, disappearing entirely a little beyond Champoton. This village, which soon came in sight, is situated on the bank of a river of the same name, having its source in impassable swamps, fourteen leagues to the southward. We saw at its mouth a pretty large bank of oysters. The species (*ostrea Virginica?*) is large, long, and rough, with prominent hinge and valves slightly bent; its taste is pleasant, and it is better known to the gourmands of Campeachy than to naturalists. Champoton, (formerly called Potonchan), is a spot justly celebrated in the history of the Conquest. The Indians obstinately disputed with the Spaniards the possession of this military post, which, in a dry country, was naturally of great importance on account of its supply of water. Three times, during an interval of twenty years, did the invaders endeavor to establish themselves here, but were as often repulsed with heavy loss. Bernal Diaz, who accompanied Cortez, in the first battle which took place here, has left an animated account of it. He says, "This was a battle in every sense of the word. . . The Indians were armed with huge bows and arrows, shields, lances, and large swords, edged with flint; they had also bodies of slingers, and men armed with poles hardened in the fire. They fell upon us

like furious dogs, and their attack was so impetuous that above seventy of our men were wounded in no time." In consequence of this and subsequent misfortunes, the place was named *Mala Pelea*, "Unfortunate Combat," which name is still perpetuated in that of the bay. Except in these reminiscences Champoton inspires the traveller with the most cheerful and pleasant ideas, and he finds difficulty in realizing that the green hills and cool shades before him, which breathe only of peace, calm, and security, were once the scene of savage fury and slaughter, and the theatre of one of the bloodiest combats recorded in early American history.

My mind had long been running on the *caymans* of Champoton river, where they are said to be extremely numerous. I was anxious to observe these monsters in their own domain, and to distinguish myself by some exploit at their expense, while at the same time extending our knowledge of natural history. Hardly had we reached the shore when, arming myself with a musket and hunting knife, I plunged among the undergrowth, and followed up the course of the river. I proceeded cautiously, listening to the murmur of the current, and hoping to get well within sight of my victim while avoiding the dangerous sweep of his tail. But the shadow of the mangrove trees, crossed by broken bars of sunlight, constantly deceived me; every bare root or rough trunk on which these shadows fell, made my heart palpitate, and inspired me with secret horror, and at every step I fancied that I could distinguish the corrugated back of one of these monsters, and even detect the musky odor which they emit, and which is said to reveal their presence. But in reality I saw only mouldering pieces of wood, and moss-covered stones, and heard no other noise than the rustling of the leaves which had fallen from the branches overhead. I found no caymans in Champoton!

Toward evening we reëmbarked, carrying with us a swarm

of mosquitos, which, in conjunction with the roaches and the motion of the boat, made the night miserable. In the morning the horizon presented an unbroken line of forests; but toward the middle of the day, we discerned, in a north-easterly direction, the flat and sandy island of Carmen, the extremity of which is covered with high undergrowth. We were, in fact, in the canal which separates the island from the continent. Soon the shore receded on our left; and in front of us we saw *la Laguna de Terminos.* The navigators who first discovered this shore in 1518, fancied that it was an arm of the ocean encircling Yucatan, and in reality they did not find any western boundary to this peninsula, which they considered to be an island. Later it was ascertained that the coast was continuous, and then, for the first time, the true character of the Lagoon was understood. The name of *Terminos* (confines) nevertheless remained, bearing testimony of the incertitude which attended its discovery.*

The water in the channel was turbid, and covered with vegetable debris, brought into it by the current of the river. Little islands of dazzling green were distributed like satellites around the principal one of Carmen, serving as places of refuge for numberless aquatic birds, which flocked toward them in alarm at our approach. After three hours' navigation in this archipelago, having meantime doubled the western point of Carmen, we perceived the foliage of the cocoa trees, and soon after discerned the loftier buildings of the city. I landed with less of pomp than the padre, but with better success, and met with such a hearty reception in the family of Mr. Johnson, the English consul, as almost to repay me for my maritime tribulations.

* "Llegamos á una boca como de rio grande; parecia como estrecho; tan gran boca tenia que dezia el piloto Anton de Alaminos que era isla é partian terminos con la tierra, ya por esta causa le pusimos nombre *Boca de Terminos.*"—*Bernal Diaz, Hist. Verdad* c. 10.

The island of Carmen is low, flat, and sandy, seven leagues long, by about two in breadth. It protects the Lagoon on the Gulf side, leaving an open passage at each extremity. The eastern canal, by which we entered, is only accessible for *canoas*, and is frequented solely by those engaged in the coasting trade of Yucatan. The western pass, with thirteen feet of water, and a muddy bottom, can be navigated without danger by merchantmen of small tonnage, which, however, for greater security, unload outside the bar. The island is the great market for dye-woods, principally the *hæmatoxylon*, better known as logwood, which abounds on the alluvial lands to the south of the Lagoon. The wood, cut into billets and stripped of its bark, is floated down the rivers and deposited in the warehouses of Carmen, whence it is exported to the different ports of Europe. The population, consisting of about two thousand souls, subsists entirely by this kind of industry, for the island itself is sterile, so that the land rarely produces more than two successive harvests, unless enriched by manure—a process almost unknown in this portion of America. The greater part of the necessary supplies of the people come from abroad and are sold for cash; but business cannot long continue on this basis, for the wealth of the forests, unprotected by legislation, decreases rapidly, and the time is not far distant when the cupidity of proprietors, all of whom are exclusively governed by considerations of immediate gain, will have exhausted this their only source of revenue. But Nature has disguised the poverty of the island under a mantle of loveliest verdure, which pleasantly deceives the eye. At sight of this vegetation, which is frequently vigorous, it would seem as if the lack of production was due to the want of industry or perseverance on the part of the people. In fact the expectation of reaping without sowing has become so general in the Spanish part of the new world, that every piece of land which does not at once respond to the require-

ments of the cultivator is abandoned as worthless. The plains of Carmen, covered with thick undergrowth or coarse grass, could doubtless be made useful to man, since the heat of the sun is only superficial, and water is to be found very near the surface. There is furthermore, a saline humidity in the soil, the result of capillary attraction, and the waters from rains accumulate in the low places so as to form perennial swamps, which overflow during the winter, covering the surrounding country with a fertilizing deposit. These observations would not be lost in Europe, but here they are unheeded. Labor doubtless is a hard condition of our existence; nevertheless love of family, ambition, and the desire to secure an independence, triumph over the natural repugnance with which it inspires us, to such a degree as to invest even the most fatiguing toil with a qualified charm. It is only in Spanish America that men are to be found so rich in their poverty as to be above the knowledge of want. Nothing can stimulate them to an accumulation beyond what is necessary to meet their barest necessities. Their happiness consists in repose; their ambition is limited to obtaining sufficient for daily sustenance; and as to their families—they leave them in the hands of Providence, and consider themselves relieved from all further responsibility!

One would suppose that in so poor an island, where the only wealth of the inhabitants is in their manual ability, labor would be very cheap; it is not so, however, for the reasons I have given above. The promise of a large remuneration rarely overcomes the apathy of the most needy, and hence it is that the pay of the laborer is seldom less than a dollar per day. If he consents to pursue his task for a week, it is only to acquire means sufficient to live in idleness for a month. On a little farm near the town, I knew an overseer who received a salary of two hundred and fifty dollars per annum, besides board and other accessories, simply for taking charge

of the house, attending to a small garden, and overseeing the cultivation of from six to eight acres of ground; and the proprietor congratulated himself exceedingly on getting his work done so cheaply.

In an architectural point of view, the city of Carmen presents no striking feature. As stone is not to be found there, building materials are obtained from the neighboring forests. The roofs are generally thatched, though they are occasionally tiled with flat stones taken from the ballast of ships. On the banks of the Lagoon, where the houses are huddled closely together, these rustic roofs do not appear to great advantage; but outside of the commercial centre, in more retired portions of the city, they harmonize with the bananna trees which shade them and with the primitive gardens which isolate every habitation. The streets, bordered with the white and red flowers of the periwinkle, and terminating in the surrounding forests, resemble the avenues of some imperial park; and the irregular paths that cross them and lose themselves in clumps of verdure on either hand, make a strange appeal to the imagination of the stranger, who is constantly tempted to explore the mysterious recesses to which they appear to lead. As one walks along contemplatively, he is suddenly startled by the whizzing flight of the humming-bird; but his eye scarcely falls on it, when seeming to emit a ruddy spark, it disappears among the branches, like some brilliant beetle, or rather like the sphinx, which it resembles in its flight. When the sun approaches its zenith, and nature is sunk in silence and repose, the iguana may be surprised, extended on some branch of a tree, where he reposes in a state apparently between sleeping and waking; but his vigilance never abandons him. At the least sound he lifts his head, his throat dilates, his crest becomes elevated, and he listens without moving; but the changes in his color betray his uneasiness, his back of sky-blue deepens to purple, then he reflects the shades of the

foliage which surrounds him, and in the midst of which he does not fail soon to vanish. The streets, as I have said, end only in the forest, which is an impenetrable thicket of thorny trees and vine-like plants, with velvety pods, which depend from the branches and when mature drop their seed on the ground to spring up again in new luxuriance. One must tread here with care, for these are the pods of the *negretia urens*, (*cow-hage?*) and are covered with imperceptible thorns which come off on the slightest contact, penetrating the skin, and producing the most painful irritation. Most of the finer trees have fallen beneath the axe; nevertheless some magnificent *ceibas* still remain, their widely-spread branches at a little distance strongly resembling those of the oriental cedars. The manzanilla, called in the country *chechém*, may be recognized by the deep green of its foliage, and by its deceptive fruit resembling crab-apples. Doubtless popular credulity has calumniated this tree, in accusing even its shadow of poisonous influences; but woodcutters are well acquainted with the caustic nature of its poison, which produces on the skin the same effect as a burn. In a word, the forests of these countries offer an infinite field for study and experiment; and I am surprised that the hope of discovery which constantly draws naturalists hither, does not exercise the same attraction over other classes of *savants*. Here nature produces nothing insignificant. The fluids of the various forms of vegetation are not exclusively confined to supporting and perpetuating the species; but the rich sap which vivifies every plant and which pervades its every fibre, is almost always endowed with specific virtues, capable of connecting, by new relationships, these organized bodies with the rest of creation. How many unknown principles, among these varieties of resins, aromatic gums, oleaginous essences, and milky juices, are only awaiting discovery in order to advance the arts and the industrial sciences, or add to our medical resources! How many, I

say, are waiting for some fortuitous circumstance to reveal their beneficent and useful properties! Such were my reflections in rambling through these forests, where my constantly awakened curiosity prevented any feeling of fatigue. Nevertheless, I must admit that my enjoyment was often marred by the annoyances of insects, and by irritating contact with poisonous plants.

I was always glad, during my solitary excursions, to be near some habitation when the bells of *Angelus* sounded for evening prayers. At such times the whole family would drop upon their knees, the father reciting the prayer while the mother united her voice with those of the children in the responses. When the ceremony was ended, all would rise simultaneously and wish each other good-night—a pious custom which dates from the Conquest, and which, for the time being, invests the father of a family with that patriarchal dignity which he too frequently throws off. I happened, one evening, to be attracted by a religious chant to a modest little church, not far from the shore, where the people were celebrating some *fiesta*. The altar was brilliantly illuminated; incense burned around it, and the worshippers, chanting songs of adoration, were bowed to the dust before its symbols. There is incontestably a kind of poetry about the ceremonies of the Catholic church, which always touches the heart, and the circumstances surrounding me rendered me peculiarly open to its impressions. In witnessing this poor little gathering, forgotten by almost all the world, but still offering up its vows and aspirations in prayer to a common God, I was moved in spite of myself; the thought of my own isolation also touched a sympathetic chord, and I felt, as I had never felt before, the value of that divine doctrine which consoles every affliction, and strengthens the courage of all, while it establishes a holy communion between every member of the great Christian family, and does not forget even the traveller

in its pious formulas. . . . At this moment, a lively air rose from the depths of the church, drowning the last echoes of the chant to which I had been listening. The contrast was so marked and the effect so unforeseen, that for a moment I felt bewildered, like a man who suddenly passes from darkness into light. I recognized, from the first few notes, the movement of a contra-dance which is by no means new on the other side of the Atlantic. This singular prelude was followed by a waltz, to which a lively polka succeeded. The padre had engaged for this solemn occasion, an organ recently imported into the island, where the instrument had excited the liveliest transports of admiration. Happily, the profane reminiscences which it awakened in my mind, remained a mystery to the other worshippers, who, absorbed in respectful admiration, found in this harmony only an expression of the sentiments by which they were themselves animated.

The island of Carmen enjoys a great reputation for salubrity throughout the whole circle of the Gulf—an advantage due to its dry, sandy soil, which supports but little organized matter for decay. March, April, and May, are the dryest months of the year on all parts of the coast; not a drop of rain falls during this interval, and the rivers then subside to their lowest level. Toward the middle of May, a few showers occur, accompanied with thunder and lightning. In November the north winds begin to blow and dissipate the storms, which become less and less frequent, until the return of the equinox. Calculating by meteorological phenomena, the regularity of which is remarkable under the tropics, the year may be divided into three seasons—the rainy, the windy, and the dry. In April and May the flowers blossom, although many plants, favored by the mildness of the temperature, are in flower and fruit for the whole year round. Transplanted to this latitude, the plants of our hemisphere would come under the same laws with those indigenous to the soil; but the mod-

ifications which they undergo, in the phases of their existence, are much more remarkable on the other side of the equator than on this. It has been observed that the phenomena of their vegetation are regulated by the course of the sun, and the period of their flowering is determined, as with us, by the return of that luminary to the nearest tropic.*

Neither on the islands, nor on the shores of the Lagoon are to be found any tumuli, ruins, or other remains of the industry of former times. It is a savage waste, which nature seems to have reserved for herself, by refusing it the gifts that would have rendered it useful to man. Nevertheless, at the period of the Conquest, there existed here and there *oratorios*, constructed of hewn stone, ornamented with idols and with poles supporting the horns of stags, which were probably placed there as offerings. The erection of these monuments, the ruins of which have disappeared, was attributed to the piety of stray hunters or merchants, who, from time to time, traversed this solitary region.†

At night, during my stay at Carmen, when the busy hum of the city was still, I often sat for hours at my open window, gazing out on the solitary Lagoon, and picturing to myself the strange and mysterious region which spread beyond it, and in which I was so soon to enter. Some vague apprehensions of the future, mingled with sad, sweet thoughts of the past, sometimes crossed my mind; but the solemn aspect of the country, the august calm in which it was wrapped, never failed ultimately to inspire me with a profoundly religious confidence. I felt myself drawn by some irresistible power towards that Being who presides over the peaceful beauty of the night, as over the brilliant splendor of the day; and I persuaded myself that his infinite goodness would also watch over and protect me in my wanderings. At this hour of quiet and repose, the silence

* A. Saint-Hilaire, *Voyage dans l'intérieur du Brésil*, 2e partie, t. i., p. 54.

† B. Diaz, c. 10. Herrera, Dec. ii., l. iii., c. 2.

was never broken, except by the nocturnal chirp of the cricket, and by the murmur of the Lagoon, just rippled by the gentle and refreshing breeze which seemed to come from the distant horizon, laden with new life and vigor for the exhausted traveller.

The Lagoon of Terminos is about fifteen leagues long by from eight to ten broad, and in its tranquillity and the color of its waters more resembles an inland lake than a dependency of the ocean. Its yellow tint is no doubt due to the soluble soil and the drainage from the marshes which surround it. Nothing can be more complicated than the hydrography of this little corner of the globe, where the capricious waters percolate slowly from lagoon to lagoon, and seem to run athwart of each other in their devious course. During the dry season, notwithstanding the complication of waters, one may travel by land without danger, provided he is reasonably familiar with the country; but when the rains set in, every channel overflows, and the ground gradually disappears under a tangled network of creeks and lagoons, through which passage is impossible except in canoes, and then only with the aid of practised guides. At this season, one may travel from the Usumasinta to the Tabasco, and from thence to Chiltepeque, uninterruptedly by water.

The principal river of this region, as already stated, is the Usumasinta.* It reaches the sea through a number of channels, the largest of which, called Rio Palizada, flows into the Lagoon of Terminos. Further on I shall have occasion to give the results of my explorations of this great river, which is little known even by name, and is very erroneously laid down in our maps. The outline of the Lagoon, on the other hand, has been traced with great exactness. It constitutes a

* Dampier, I believe, is the only traveller who has given the true name of this river, which is *Summasenta.—A New Voyage round the World, etc.;* vol. ii., p. 54.

commercial centre celebrated throughout the Gulf, although its existence is almost unknown in Europe. In the eyes of the local navigators, nothing can compare with it. Its basin, the canoes which traverse it, and the cutting and transportation of the dye-woods on its shores, comprise, according to their notions, the extent, wealth, and movement of the whole commercial world. Besides the sword-fish and the different species of sharks, which swarm in it, may also be seen, when the waters are still, the voracious ray-fish, often of gigantic size, called, in this country, *manta*. It is dreaded by fishermen, and they rarely succeed in capturing it. According to their account, it awaits its prey quietly under the shadow of aquatic plants, and after seizing it smothers it between the lobes of its fins, as between the folds of a mantle or *manta*. On the inner or continental shores of the Lagoon, the dominion of savage nature commences. Dangerous animals infest the woods; reptiles twine themselves around the trunks of the trees; the atmosphere is alive with insects; and man himself is no longer master of creation, but a bewildered wayfarer, who journeys, with furtive steps, amidst a thousand dangers.

On the evening of the 24th of March, we left Carmen and set sail, Morin and myself, in a canoe bound for the interior. A little before night-fall we reached the mouth of the Palizada, and not daring to venture further, came to anchor. Having no other resource left we were fain to amuse ourselves in watching the rising of the moon. While thus engaged I suddenly felt a sharp pain between the shoulders. Hastily taking off my coat, a scorpion fell at my feet; he endeavored to escape, but I prevented him by a well-aimed blow. Morin rubbed the spot where he had stung me with ammonia, and the next morning it was cured. The *patron* of the canoe, a vigorous old Sambo,* with bronzed complexion, woolly head, and cheerful disposition—a rare thing in these melancholy

* Cross between the Indian and Negro.

parts where life itself seems a burden—the *patron* pretended that I had introduced the scorpion on board, since, according to his account, his vessel was a model of cleanliness. But while he was speaking, a new enemy, precisely similar in appearance to the first, ran across the deck, placing the patron's own person in danger. A moment after, the mainsail was rolled up, and the moonbeams falling directly on the bottom of the boat, revealed to us that it was swarming with thousands of black roaches, which the light seemed to disturb. I shuddered with disgust at this spectacle, and the other passengers, although more accustomed to such things than myself, manifested scarcely less repugnance at the spectacle. Every one had some story to relate of the voracity of *cucarachas*, and all agreed that it would be difficult to duplicate such a collection as we had before us. Don Pancho, the *patron*, gave in at last, but added, by way of justification, that these insects were useful substitutes for barometers, and that their activity, to which we could bear testimony, indicated a change in the weather. In spite of this prediction, we preferred closing the hold and sleeping in the open air. During the night the wind blew with great violence, but no rain fell. The air was so fresh, however, that I awoke at early dawn in a shiver. The day looked anything but promising; a grey band rested on the western horizon, and floating about here and there were small opaque masses of vapor, condensed during the night. Higher up, great clouds were gathered, obscuring the whole sky. When the sun rose, it appeared only as a luminous spot, tinging the clouds at their base with a dim, reddish light like the distant reflection of a fire; soon it disappeared from the horizon, casting a last ray upon the Lagoon, which was still enveloped in the morning fog. Under it, the water assumed the tints of the opal; then the light gradually faded away, and all nature assumed the sombre tint of the clouds. We had now reached the dangerous pass known by the name of *Boca Chica*,

where the deposits of sand which have narrowed the mouth of the river, and the trunks of trees which have been accumulated by the current, occasion from time to time the most terrible disasters. Don Pancho assured me that the crews of the vessels shipwrecked here were never heard of afterwards, inasmuch as the depths of this part of the lake are peopled with frightful monsters. Our canoe nevertheless got along without difficulty, gliding between a double row of mangrove trees, as tall as oaks, which continued until we entered a new lake, called *Las Cruces*. The first fragments of land which we reached can scarcely be termed islands, as the water permeates them in every part. Little by little, however, the ground assumes consistency, and gradually imprisons the water in regular channels. We soon entered a third Lagoon, peopled by myriads of sea-gulls, with silvery plumage, which flapped their way from island to island, making the solitude noisy with their clamor. Several canoes, beating against the wind, were endeavoring to descend the river, after having awaited like ourselves the rising of the sun in order to traverse the pass of *Boca Chica*. The shore reminded me of that which I had so much admired on approaching the Island of Pines; but here vegetation had not suffered from hurricanes, and appeared in all of its magnificence. Besides, the route which we followed, enlivened by the movement of the canoes, surpassed in grandeur and in interest the canal into which Columbus strayed with his vessel. No words can convey an idea of the forests which surrounded us, and which the adjacent waters endow with perpetual youth. The rude picturesqueness of the trunks, the diversity of foliage, the occasional promontories, the numerous creeks, the little islands constantly appearing and disappearing, the fallen trees which still continued to live, and the myriads of birds which people these retired shores—these cannot be adequately described. I longed for a burst of sunlight to illuminate the magnificent picture, which to me was a new revelation of na-

ture, equally grand and strange. Suddenly the cry of "*lagarto*" directed my attention forward, and there, just in advance of the boat, I saw one of the *caymans* of the Usumasinta. Only his dorsal crest was visible, and he appeared motionless. A moment afterwards, however, he threw his snout back in the direction of the current, as if to scent the breeze, and then, the reconnoisance probably not proving satisfactory, he sank quietly down to the slimy but congenial depths of the river.

As the day advanced the sky became entirely obscured with clouds, and the shores became shrouded in a foggy veil. The water; too, assumed a greenish and sickly hue, and soon the rain began to fall, driving us to seek refuge in the close and mephitic hold, which was closely covered with a tarred cloth, and there we were left to darkness and the effluvium of accumulated filth. The passengers naturally enough were depressed and disgusted, but the sailors, in the primitive costume of these countries, noisily manifested their satisfaction, much after the fashion of frogs on similar occasions. The wind whistled through the rigging; the rain pattered on the deck, and the waves surged angrily around us, while every stick of timber in the vessel creaked under the strain. At the expiration of two hours, which appeared to us like months, the storm subsided, and we were able to emerge from our prison and obtain a breath of fresh air. During this interval we had crossed the lagoons, and were now sailing on the river. Its banks were abrupt, and composed of a soil half sand half clay. Where the shores were flat, they were covered with reeds and long grass, while here and there they were magnificently shaded by forest trees. Between these walls of verdure might be seen the blue perspective of the lagoons, terminating in a dim belt of distant forests. I now had time for observation, for the wind had died away, and we only moved onward by the aid of the *palanca*. This is a long, forked pole, used in

coasting along the river shores. One end is placed against the shoulder, and the other against the bank, and in this way the boat is gradually pushed ahead. It requires three men to execute this feat; the first two impel the boat by alternately pushing, while the third with a kind of boat-hook keeps the canoe near the shore, by catching hold of the overhanging branches. This mode of travelling is by no means expeditious, as the sail requires to be taken down in order to be out of the way of the *palanqueros*. The wind, which varies according to the winding of the stream, occasionally drives the boat among the trees, which become entangled in the rigging, and next sends it off into the middle of the stream, where the depth of the water renders the *palanca* useless. The crew's efforts have then to be redoubled in order to regain the bank, or else they are forced to await patiently the springing up of a breeze. This thankless and tiresome task is one of the few things which the Indian executes well, and for which he manifests no aversion.

Vegetation assumes a more and more interesting appearance as one advances towards the interior. Great willows with trailing branches, gigantic bamboos, beautiful *cyperaceæ* or sedges resembling the papyrus, aquatic palm-trees with their slender stems, the cecropia with its immense leaves—all unite in ornamenting both banks of the river. Besides these, masses of verdure, spangled with bunches of violet flowers, prodigious white tree trunks, and vines slender and delicate as the rigging of a ship, continually present themselves to the eye. I observed among other beautiful trees, the *jahuacte* palm, with its graceful branches bending over the water. Its fruit is acidulous, and of the shape and size of an acorn. It is much sought for by children, and is not without its appeal to the traveller. A great variety of birds enjoy their existence in peace in these solitudes. Among them is the ibis with its brilliant plumage, the *aramus* with its ringing voice, and the blue porphyrio

called by the inhabitants *gallo de Montezuma* (Montezuma's chicken). The king-fisher, with its ringed neck, is also found here, of much larger size than with us. It flutters continually over the water, while the falcon, uttering piercing shrieks, plunges suddenly into the river, rises perpendicularly with its prey, and then whirls itself upwards high in the air, until almost lost to the view. In contrast with these pleasant sights, we fancied that we discerned numerous alligators, motionlessly watching us from the shores of the little coves of the river—but then it was almost impossible to distinguish these amphibious monsters from the uprooted trunks of trees, which the river had covered with its slimy sediment. Reposing on the deck, wrapped in my cloak, I enjoyed with rapture a view truly enchanting from its novelty, and sufficiently exciting to make up for the lack of associations. During the whole of my journey, these pleasurable emotions continued; my interest and curiosity were constantly excited, for I was travelling towards the Unexplored and Unknown; and always excepting the impression produced by my first view of the New World, I must say that the scenes on the Usumasinta, by their melancholy grandeur, and primitive poetry, have left the most profound and lasting impressions on my mind.

Toward evening we reached a low piece of ground, surrounded by pools of water, called the Island of Birds, but which should have borne the name of Paradise of Mosquitos. As soon as the boat was secured, every one commenced making preparations for the night, by putting up a kind of square tent, made from a few yards of muslin. These tents are in general use in this country. Once inside of them, (and the operation of entering must be performed with great rapidity), every aperture is closed by tucking the ample folds of the muslin under the mat which serves as a bed. I was not so much of a novice as to be totally unprovided with some protection of this kind, for I had purchased in France a mosquito net,

which, according to the representations of the vender, was of the newest and best variety. But I was soon convinced that the inventor of my net had never travelled on the Usumasinta! Hardly had I introduced myself with the utmost adroitness and caution, under my gauze curtain, than the enemy, guided by his unfailing instincts, contrived to effect an entrance into my sanctuary. I heard with terror his familiar hum, and any lingering doubts as to the reality of his presence were soon dispelled by hundreds of bites all over my person. Vainly did I endeavor, by every possible device, to expel my persecutors. Finally, abandoning the attempt in no very amiable frame of mind, I vacated the place, wishing alike the net and its inventor to the devil! I went out, but the buzzing noise of mosquitos seemed to resound all along the banks; the air was thick with them; and I verily believe they were sufficiently numerous to have hidden even the sun from view! The hours passed tediously enough, in vain efforts to do battle against the myriads of my invisible enemies. I contemplated with indifference the nocturnal aspect of the landscape—the great shadows thrown on the water, and the phosphorescent light emitted by the fire-flies! The partisans of final causes will doubtless find some satisfactory manner of explaining the mosquito's mission and utility. For myself, after having, during that whole night, reflected on the subject, I was forced to admit that I could arrive at no conclusion, implying a useful or ornamental purpose in the creation of this most pestilent of insects!

The morning finally broke, and I had the satisfaction of rousing every one from his slumbers. Soon after, we embarked. The weather had cleared up and was delightful, but the wind was not strong, and as we proceeded slowly, I was enabled to do a little quiet shooting from the deck of our boat. Don Pancho kindly steered it so as to receive the game as it fell, not because he shared my ambition to advance the inter-

ests of natural science, but because he saw an augmentation of our supply of provisions in every bird added to my collection. In truth, our fare was anything but sumptuous. Mouldy biscuits, *tassajo*, and black beans formed our repasts so constantly and so usually, that I found myself frequently sighing for the shark's flesh of Campeachy. Toward the middle of the day, we reached the farm of *San Geronimito*, where we saw a large quantity of dye-woods piled up on the bank awaiting transportation to the Lagoon. Flowing into the Usumasinta at this point, is the *Rio Viejo*, which encircles a vast territory, intersected by lagoons, called the island of *San Isidro*. The fall of the land is here so trifling and indecisive, that the *Rio Viejo* describes three quarters of a circle, and in one place runs for nearly two leagues in an entirely opposite direction from its general course, as if in doubt which route to follow in order to reach the ocean.

As we approached the town of *Palizada*, the river became narrower and more rapid; the forests were more open, and the eye was enabled to wander at will over the undulating bosoms of the savannas, illuminated by the rays of the setting sun, where quiet seemed to reign supreme. The willows bending over the river, the pools of luminous water, the herds of cattle, and the distant forests, all formed a truly enchanting picture, giving rise in my mind to a most pleasing illusion. I fancied that I saw before me a familiar landscape, which I can never forget, the plains where I had played during childhood; there were the same willows, the same swamp, the same meandering river; and, as my imagination travelled back to the past, I endeavored by a pleasing fiction to transport myself there also! But, strange phenomenon! my most recent and my dearest remembrances appeared of distant date, as if obscured by the lapse of many years of time. Remoteness of place, it seems, produces nearly the same effect as remoteness of time; the perspective, in both cases, is much the same;

yet never before had I so fully appreciated the fact. But the vegetation by which I was surrounded soon dispelled every illusion. Here stood the *bojon*, a straight, slender tree, with a spreading, umbrella-shaped top, reminding me of the Italian pines; there the cecropia, shaped like a gigantic candelabra, thrust its arms beyond the skirts of the forest; while the mimosa with its pink blossoms, and the beautiful convolvulus, ornamented the banks of the river, over which also drooped masses of the arum, with its arrow-shaped leaves and long tendrils floating off in the current.

It was ten o'clock at night, when a group of cocoa trees, in this part of the world a sure sign of human habitations, rising over the forest, gave notice that the village of Palizada was near at hand. Directly we discerned lights, and a confused mass of objects moving about in the darkness, and soon after we reached the landing place of the town, after a journey of fifty-four hours from Carmen. We had travelled upward of eighteen leagues, in accomplishing a distance of not more than seven, in a direct line. The hour was rather late to seek for shelter; fortunately, however, one of our passengers was a resident here, and relieved our embarrassment on this score by placing his dwelling at our service. Hammocks were soon hung up, and each of us took one and slept with real satisfaction until morning. Hospitality does not involve great trouble or responsibility under the tropics, where, with two nails and a few yards of cotton cloth, the host is always prepared to receive and entertain his visitors!

Next day I presented myself and my letters of introduction to the padre of the place. I found Father Alberti a man quite superior to the generality of those of his profession in Spanish America, who are mostly very ignorant, and lead an exceedingly unedifying life. He was born in Guatemala, and to his travels, and perhaps also to his misfortunes he was indebted for a knowledge of the world and a freedom from

prejudices, which I was surprised to meet with, in such a spot. I never ascertained through what combination of circumstances he happened to be exercising his functions in a country so far distant from his own, and in a sphere so unworthy of his merit. He however did his duty most conscientiously; for in this little town, where he was at once pastor, magistrate and physician, every one loved and honored him.

A few years ago, *Palizada* was only a miserable hamlet, exclusively inhabited by Indians. But the discovery of dye-woods in its neighborhood immediately created a business movement, and rapidly ameliorated the condition of its inhabitants. A number of young mulattoes without family or fortune, a disinherited race which the laxity of morals in Spanish America rapidly multiplies, first sought here the means of subsistence. Then came tailors, barbers, and merchants, in the hope of sharing the benefits of the new settlement. The war in which we were engaged with Mexico, in 1838, also introduced into Palizada a few Frenchmen, victims of the hatred which the success of our arms had excited in the breasts of our enemies.* I was not a little surprised to meet with compatriots in this swampy, unknown region. They all seemed to be doing well, and to have no regrets for what they had lost by their expulsion, The trade in Campeachy wood is here, as in the island of Carmen, the only source of revenue, and the only calling pursued by the people. Every thing in the way of enterprise and capital concentrates in this pursuit; that is to say, in buying woods at the lowest prices here, to sell them at the highest possible rates at the Lagoon. This operation is an easy one with ready money, for the Spanish proprietors, continually driven to expedients for gratifying their ruling passion, that of gambling, can never resist a

* The government of Mexico revenged itself for the capture of San Juan de Ulua, by ordering all the French residents in the country to leave the republic within fifteen days!

golden appeal, and they submit to almost any reduction of price in order to procure ready money. When the supply of wood is scarce, the people are often driven to painful straits; but it is impossible to feel any great sympathy for a population possessing a soil so productive and fertile, and who are yet too indolent to turn it to account. Notwithstanding the size of the place and its growing importance, it has no market. The commonest necessities of life, and such things as game, fish, etc., which abound in its vicinity, can only be got with difficulty, and at exorbitant prices. In fact, every pursuit is absorbed in the prevailing struggle for dye-woods, precisely as in auriferous countries all industry is swallowed up in the struggle for gold, regardless of the thousand other treasures which nature spreads out on every hand.

The Rio Palizada is the most eastern, and as before said, the most important outlet of the Usumasinta. Its depth in front of the town to which it gives its name, is from four to seven fathoms, varying according to the season. During the rainy season it frequently inundates the country far into the interior, leaving only a few scattered islets of elevated ground visible to the eye above the expanse of waters. At these times the inhabitants of Palizada, and such others as may be established on the banks of the stream, are obliged to abandon the lower portions of their dwellings, and perch themselves on temporary scaffoldings above the reach of the overflow, or else are driven to seek refuge with their fowls on the roofs of their houses. The site of the town is sometimes covered with water to the depth of three yards.

By the month of May the subsidence of the water is complete, and the drenched ground becomes dry again. This is the time of epidemic fevers so fatal to strangers, and which few of the natives themselves escape, in a form more or less severe.

The vast swamps surrounding Palizada are worthy of the

attention of naturalists, and if known, would become a very El Dorado of hunters. Among the curiosities of the region is a singular plant with long fibrous roots, which vegetates on the surface of the water, spreading out from the shores of the lagoons and sluggish canals in a net-work of verdure, like a floating meadow. It never spreads entirely over the channels of the canals, which are consequently left open for navigation, but elsewhere it is so dense as to be impenetrable to boats, and in turn supports other varieties of plants and flowers. I have said that this low country is studded here and there with little hills, almost deserving the name of islands, which rise among the swamps and above the general overflows. They are always densely wooded, and are the haunts of black squirrels and many other varieties of animals. But these are of course few in numbers as compared with the feathered inhabitants of these marshy regions. The latter throng the earth, the air, and the water in countless multitudes, as they have doubtless done from the earliest ages of the world. Innumerable web-footed and long-legged birds swim, plunge, and fly around the traveller; the *tantale* with his hard crooked beak, the heron white as the spotless snow, the shy spoon-bill in its pink plumage, the long-necked flamingo with flaming wings, infinite varieties of teals and ducks, and last of all the crane, slowly pursuing his stately walk, or standing still and gazing solemnly on vacancy. Different species of birds of prey utter piercing cries, and describe great circles above the tree tops. They pounce rapidly into the swamps in search of prey, but instead of finding it they frequently fall into the hungry jaws of some alligator, concealed beneath the floating vegetation. And finally the vulture, perched on some dead tree-top watches over the evolutions of the feathered multitude. To the farthest limits of the horizon, one sees only birds filling the air and thronging the water. The greater part of these live on terms of strange familiarity with the cattle which roam over the savannas. I have fre-

quently seen a white heron make use of the back of a cow or bull as a means of transport across a stream. It required some little effort for the bird to maintain its equilibrium, but it never abandoned its post before reaching the point for which it had set out. The turtles, which are equally numerous, contribute, in spite of their timidity, to the general animation. Now they swim in the open water, scarcely rippling its surface with their flippers; now they float on its bosom, and anon drag their heavy bodies toilsomely along the shore.

But of all the feathered inhabitants of these humid regions, the *jacana* is most distinguished for his grace and vivacity. Always in motion, he skims lightly, accompanied by his mate, over the floating verdure of the lagoons, tripping dexterously from leaf to leaf, as if fearful of wetting his toes. Nature has endowed him with a formidable weapon; he conceals beneath his wing a spur as sharp as steel, with which he can strike his enemy with fatal force. But he is by no means quarrelsome; when disturbed, he flies off with a scream to some other point, not far distant, having previously assured himself, from the top of some tall tree, that it is a safe retreat. After alighting he remains perfectly still for a moment, with wings expanded, ready for a flight in the event of the slightest alarm. This charming bird, I afterwards ascertained, is found all over tropical America. The Spaniards call him *gallerote*, and the Indians of Tabasco *chechelnab*, bird of the *nab* or nymphæa.

I noticed in the vicinity of Palizada great numbers of the mango tree. Originally introduced from India, it has become acclimated here, and has generated so rapidly as to appear to form a part of the primitive forest. It produces abundantly, and when ripe the ground is literally covered with its golden fruit. But it rots there in neglect. It might easily be distilled for the production of alcohol, but the ignorant and indolent population are not equal even to this small effort in the

way of enterprise! The mango is reputed to be a healthful fruit, endowed, it is said, with purifying virtues, besides being very pleasant to the taste. The pulp, of a beautiful yellow, is firm and full of juice, the seed is large and stringy, the skin soft and of a yellowish green, with a slight odor of turpentine.

I tasted for the first time, at the table of Father Alberti, a species of *anona*, which the Spaniards call *guanabana* and the French *corossol* (*A. muricata* L.) Easily recognizable by its green color, its pyramidal shape, and by the protuberances on its surface, this fruit has a peculiarly agreeable flavor, although coupled with a biting, wild taste, which indicates that it grows in a virgin forest, and has not had the advantages of culture. The extremity of the royal palm is eaten at Palizada; it is the cabbage palm of ancient travellers—a droll name, which sins against all the rules of analogy. This production is not a peculiarity of special palm trees; all vegetables of the same family produce a sprout at the top, which in many varieties is both large and tender, and fit for food. Unfortunately, however, it is necessary to cut down a whole tree in order to obtain this so-called cabbage.

The Usumasinta river and the neighboring lagoons contain a great variety of fish, and among others a singular species, which attains a yard in length, and which is called in the country *peje lagarto* (alligator fish), probably the *Lepidosteus gavialis* of Lacepide. In shape it resembles the pike, but with a straighter and longer head. Its body is covered with scales of a lozenge shape, scattered in oblique series, and are very stiff and tough. The fishermen roast this fish in its armor, which, after it is cooked, they remove. The fresh-water turtles also serve as an article of food. I counted five different varieties, among others that called *hicotea* (*emys ornata* of Gray), which is the largest and most esteemed. Its

flesh strongly resembles that of the chicken, and is much more delicate than that of the sea turtles.*

The natural advantages of the country, in the respects enumerated, are counterbalanced by the pest of mosquitos, which obliges the inhabitants to close their doors hermetically on the approach of evening. Besides, each house is the resort of a multitude of mischievous insects, disagreeable reptiles, and offensive animals. In addition to rats, lizards, and bats, there are scorpions, enormous roaches, myriads of ants, and several hideous varieties of spiders.

I was not long in finding out that here the researches to which I had devoted myself, for the benefit of the natural sciences, required to be pursued with greater circumspection than I had before adopted. I frequently heard mention made, under the name of *culebras de hueso*, of the rattlesnakes which infest the neighboring forests, and I found an explanation for the terror which these reptiles inspire in the want of medicinal knowledge among the inhabitants. All the way from the island of Carmen a still more fearful species had been mentioned to me, the name of which from time to time saluted my ears, and excited my curiosity. How was I to triumph over the indolence and antipathy of the Indians to procure one of these reptiles? "We have," they said, "an antidote against the bite of the *culebra;* but the venom of the *nahuyaca* is certain death."

* M. Waldeck tells a curious story of the destruction of the *caymans*, or what our author calls *crocodiles*, by the *hicotea* or *xicotea*. The shell of the latter is proof against the crushing force of the cayman's jaws, and in consequence he is swallowed alive. But his testaceous covering is equally proof against the cayman's digestive powers, while his tenacity of life is so great that he is able to interfere seriously with the monster's internal arrangements —so seriously, indeed, that the cayman soon pays the penalty of his greediness by death. M. Waldeck affirms that he often examined the bodies of defunct caymans, and invariably found a living *xicotea* in their stomachs.—*Voyage dans l' Yucatan*, p. 9.—*T.*

All the information which I have obtained concerning this reptile, wherever it is known, concurs in respect to the frightful effects of its bite. In a few hours the strongest man, in the best of health, becomes a corpse. The excitement of the nervous system at first induced is followed by complete prostration; blood flows from every pore and life ebbs away with frightful rapidity.* The Indians insist that the *nahuyaca* does not confine itself to biting when assaulted, but that it boldly attacks pedestrians, and even precipitates itself into boats coasting along the banks of the river. I will not endorse this statement, which seems to be at variance with the usual habits of serpents. The mode of sailing on the Usumasinta, where the canoes almost touch the banks, and frequently become entangled in the vegetation which fringes them, is sufficient explanation of the occasional presence, in the boats, of these dangerous and unwelcome guests.

* The symptoms which accompany the bite of this viper were observed by the Spaniards at the time of the Conquest. "There is in Chiapa," says Herrara, "great brown vipers resembling decayed wood. One of which having bitten a horse, the animal immediately perspired blood from every pore and did not survive it more than a day." Herrara, Dec. iv. ix. c. 12. This serpent is also called by the Spaniards, *vivora de sangre.*

RUINS OF PALENQUE.

II.

THE RUINS OF PALENQUE.

Departure from Palizada—*Pozol*—A Boat race—*Alïates*—Ortega—Night adventures—Magnificent foliage—The *chorcha*—A jaguar—Mosquitos—The *buho*—The *Nahsyaca* again—Remedies against snake bites—Fida—Lagoon of Catasaja—Forest solitudes—Village of Las Playas—Town of Santo Domingo—Magnificent scenery—A true philosopher—Primitive habits—Custodian of the ruins—Vandalism of travellers—Installation in the Palace of Palenque—Speculations—Origin of the ruins—Voices of the night—Lost!—An escape—The *hocco*—Adieu to the ruins—Geological discoveries—The end of an exile.

At the end of a week, after laying in a supply of provisions, consisting of biscuits, rice, and salt meat, I had my baggage placed on board of a *cayuco*, and started for the ruins of Palenque, distant thirty-five leagues. During the dry season this distance can be lessened by travelling directly across the country; but when the waters are high, it is safer to sail up to the village of *Las Playas*, from whence there is a tolerable road to the town of *Santo Domingo*, two leagues distant from the ancient city.

I observed, after leaving Palizada, that the Usumasinta began to change its appearance, and that on both banks there were occasional cultivated fields, with little houses scattered here and there. At one of these we stopped to procure mangos, water melons, and *pozol*. The Indians never set out on any expedition without a supply of pozol. This is maize made into a kind of paste, sweetened with sugar to suit the taste, and when mixed with water serves at once for food and drink. It is, at the same time, the most economical and portable kind of provision for a journey.*

* Here I may repeat what has never failed to receive mention among all

We poled along very slowly, until our boatmen, whom no encouragement could stimulate to greater speed, perceived a *cayuco* which had started from Palizada half an hour before our own, and which the curves in the river had hitherto concealed from our view. This acted as a charm in overcoming their apathy; they determined by a common impulse to pass by the boat ahead, which, however, was manned by sailors equally determined not to be beaten. An exciting race was consequently kept up all the day, much to our satisfaction. Voyaging in these canoes is not without its danger, when the bow oarsman is careless, or when his head or his vision is affected by alcohol. The depth of the water obliges the navigator to keep close to the shores, which are full of roots, scraggy tree trunks, and vegetable *debris* embedded in the mud. The most perfect equilibrium has therefore to be maintained, for the *cayuco* is only a hollow trunk of a tree, narrow, light and un-

travellers in these countries, namely, that the *maize* or Indian corn constitutes the principal article of food of the people. It is most used in the form of *tortillas*. These are made by removing the outer husk of the kernels by soaking them in strong alkali; afterwards the grain is carefully washed in cold water, ground fine with a stone roller, on a concave grinding stone, and then, in the form of a fine paste, flattened out in thin cakes, and baked rapidly on earthen platters, placed over a hot fire. The name *totoposte* is given to a kind of cake made of the same maize-paste with the tortilla, but it is thinner, only baked on one side, and then allowed to become completely dry and crisp. It has the same relation to the *tortilla* that the biscuit of commerce has to bread, and like that is specially used by travellers and sailors. The *tamal* is also made of maize, prepared as above described, mixed with pork chopped fine, tomatoes, pepper, and other unctuous and savory ingredients, which after being thoroughly cooked together, are divided into small portions of a pound each, and finally enveloped in the husks of maize, equally for preservation and ease of transport. Sometimes fowls, fish, and even vegetables and comfits are used among the ingredients instead of pork. But in addition to these substantial preparations, the maize enters into various nourishing beverages, such as *tiste*, made of parched maize ground up with sugar, cinnamon, and cacao, and, when drunk, mixed with water; the *atolé*, a kind of porridge made of the young maize while yet soft, etc. Without the maize and the plaintain the population of tropical America could not exist.

steady. The river is deep, and its steep banks are slimy and infested by alligators. To fall overboard is consequently most disagreeable as well as dangerous. So, what with dread of being upset, warfare against troublesome flies by day, and still more troublesome mosquitos by night, the voyager here is not without his excitements, albeit not of the pleasantest kind.

At eight leagues from Palizada, after sending off a large outlet in a north-eastern direction, the Usumasinta assumes its proper name. From this point the country again becomes wild in appearance; all traces of civilization disappear, and the stream, which is here double its former width, flows majestically through an unbroken avenue of gigantic trees. We were now nearing the confines of Yucatan; the left shore was already in the territory of Tabasco. On approaching this wooded region, we heard for the first time the *alüates*, or red monkeys, which fill the forests night and morning with their fearful cries. It was sundown when we anchored in a little sheltered creek, where, on the top of a steep bank, we discerned a poor hut, to which we made our way, and where we obtained all we could expect or hope for in such a spot—shelter, fire, and water. This place is called *Ortega.*

While Morin was occupied in preparing supper, I shouldered my gun, and, crossing the little clearing back of the hut, entered the forest. But how am I to describe the spectacle which there greeted my enraptured sight? From the first step I took, I fancied myself on enchanted ground. I was surrounded by palm trees, a strange and monstrous vegetation, vines trailing in every direction in the wildest disorder, old branches of trees covered with bulbous plants, like so many ærial gardens—in a word, I found myself in a scene of splendor, richness, and diversity, exceeding in its beauty the wildest dreams of the most vivid imagination! A few stray gleams of sunshine streaming through the foliage revealed all this beauty immediately before me, but beyond was a profound

darkness, impenetrable even to the sun. I stopped, bewildered and dazzled, like one who in a dark night suddenly sees a meteor flash before his eyes. I was so ecstatically absorbed, that I did not even feel the bites of the mosquitos which swarmed around me! But as the shades of evening were falling, I feared to pursue my walk farther, standing always in wholesome dread of serpents and wild animals.

I had taken but a few steps backwards, towards the skirts of the forest, when a species of fig fell at my feet. In stooping to pick it up, what was my surprise to find it rapidly followed by others, some of which struck me in their descent. There was not the least breath of air to stir the trees, and the figs were far from being sufficiently ripe to have fallen from maturity. I looked up and fancied that I perceived a black form perfectly motionless, but partially concealed by the foliage. I could not feel satisfied to leave my doubts unsolved, so discharged my gun at the object, which immediately fell, then caught itself, fell a little lower, caught itself again, and finally disappeared in the thicket. I had seen sufficient to convince me that it was a monkey of the *alüate* variety. At the report of my gun, half a dozen black, grinning visages suddenly made their appearance through the branches, and then as suddenly disappeared. I was probably right in firing; yet I could not help regretting the severity of the reproof I had administered, and I left the battle field without further disturbing these poor children of the wilderness.

On quitting the forest, I stopped to contemplate the imposing appearance presented at this hour by the Usumasinta. It seemed to be a vast basin, in which the weary waters took their rest, before following the current which slowly drew them towards the Gulf. The silence was profound, and heightened rather than disturbed by the distant howls of the alüates. The shadows deepened rapidly as the sun declined, and when it sank at last beneath the horizon, darkness seemed

to fall like a veil over the earth. The river was here and there bright under the lingering beams, but these soon paled away, leaving the land and water to the sombre embraces of the night.

On my return to the hut, I was almost suffocated by the smoke from the smouldering brands which our boatmen had piled together as a preventive against mosquitos. Seated near the fire, they devoured a heron, which we had killed in the morning, with no other seasoning than green peppers; while Morin put the finishing touch to some mysterious dish of his own composition. Fortunately I was hungry, for there was little before me to provoke an appetite. When our meal was concluded, and every one had lighted his cigar, I questioned our host touching his solitary existence. His family consisted of a wife and two young children; his furniture of a couple of hammocks, a mat, and a few cooking utensils. His gun, fishing-line, and a small cultivated field near by supplied him with provisions; when he had an abundance of these, he exchanged the surplus for such useful articles as the boatmen, who occasionally landed here, happened to bring with them. He had never been further away from this spot than to Palizada, and had no desire to exchange his solitary life and frugal independence for the excitement and sweets of civilization. "Porque?" Why? he exclaimed interrogatively, when I asked him if he would not like to see the great ocean, and the ships and people of other lands. "Porque? soy contento!" Why; am I not content? Nor was he alone in his philosophy; hundreds like him live and die in a like manner, without passing or seeking to pass beyond the congenial solitudes of the familiar wilds where their fathers lived and died before them.

Hardly had he finished his simple history, when a cry from the banks of the river startled us all, it was so like a human scream, a single one, but full of agony. We glanced

anxiously at each other, and then all hurried off toward the spot from whence it seemed to proceed. But the thick growth of the bamboos retarded our steps, and the night moreover was very dark; we listened anxiously but could hear nothing; the murmuring of the river and the buzzing of insects were the only sounds which fell on our ears. Perhaps some wayworn traveller, belated on these dangerous shores, had fallen a prey to wild animals? We shouted, but without awakening even an echo; and finally wended our way back to the hut, with hearts full of the saddest reflections.

This incident rendered our host somewhat more communicative, and he related to us many of the dangers attendant on his mode of life. Jaguars frequently prowled about his dwelling; alligators often approached it, hoping in the darkness to secure a choice morsel in his dogs or his chickens; while venomous reptiles glided familiarly over his very door-sill. These details interested but did not entertain us; since we knew that we were to pass the night just outside the hut, in an open shed. I loaded my gun, and had a large fire built on the side of the shed next to the forest. But our worst enemy, the implacable mosquito, despised our defences. I was especially singled out as his victim here, as I had been before at the *Isla de Pajaros*. In vain I had my mosquito-bar sewed to the mat which served as my bed; the precaution was idle, and only resulted to my disadvantage. Those of my readers who have ever been under the tropics, will pardon me should I repeat myself. The valiant Cortez himself grumbled bitterly about the mosquitos which he found here, and even the great battles in which he was engaged could not efface the recollection of his struggles against these despicable little enemies.* It was only nine o'clock, so I had ample time for

* "Los mosquitos que lo picavan de dia como de noche, que á lo que despues le oia decir, tenia con ellos tan malas noches, que estaba la cabeca sin sentido de no dormir."—B. Diaz, *Hist. Verdad*, c. 181.

meditation. The moon was shining full upon the river; nothing could surpass the splendor of the night. But the calm and religious repose of the scene was rudely disturbed by the howls of the alüates which throng the banks of the Usumasinta, and every night keep up a horrible chorus, so loud and sustained as to drown all other noises. No traveller ever heard the cry of this animal for the first time except with a choking sense of alarm; and no experience can reconcile him to it. I heard it every night for weeks, but it never failed to send a chill to my extremities, and I shudder now as I recall it. What with the alüates and mosquitos, the reader may be sure I got but little sleep at Ortega, and experienced a malicious pleasure in rousing up Morin and our companions, with the first glow of morning, and hurrying our departure.

Sunrise, in these wilds, is always welcomed with a choral hymn from the throats of its feathered inhabitants, in which all join without regard to the melody of their voices. Loudest and most discordant in the concert is the *penelope*, known in this country under the imitative name of *chachalaca*, which scrambles among the branches and flutters from tree-top to tree-top in a thorough gale of excitement and exuberant spirits —a tempting mark alike for the sportsman and the epicure.

As we moved up the river, I could not forbear instituting a general comparison between the forests here and our own, from which they differ not more in detail than in their distant aspects. Unlike ours, they do not round in uniform masses with waving outlines, but appear traced against the sky in a broken and often fantastic line. Here are tall apexes, curiously scant in their foliage, skeleton giants of the forest, and close by, in sharp contrast, a series of huge parasols of verdure, supported on stems so light that they seem to be suspended in the air by an invisible support. But most imposing in size, and richest in foliage, the *cantemon* is the real monarch of the woods. The very sky seems to rest on its majes-

tic crown. We passed under one of these colossi, from the branches of which depended a little city of the oriole or hanging birds' nests, so high in the air that the eye failed to detect the threads by which they were supported. In these ærial retreats this bright little member of the *passeres* family is safe from every terrestrial enemy; only the hawk or the falcon can reach him there. Among the flowering trees which thronged the banks of the river, I observed the *inga*, which sprinkled our boat with its silvery and fragrant flowers as we swept beneath it.*

Night, under the tropics, seems less a period of repose than the midday hours. When the sun reaches the zenith, as if by common accord, the breezes subside, the leaves droop, the birds retire to the coolest recesses of the forest, and man himself relapses into a sympathetic silence. Perhaps it was then that I most enjoyed the strange and rich variety and novelty of the scenes around me. In a half lethargic state I would lie back in the boat, and let the landscape float before my half-closed eyes, until gradually I would seem to lose my identity and become part of the scene itself, and absorbed in its mysterious embrace. Then I would drop off in slumber as dreamless and profound as if I had never known existence, nor shared the hopes and fears of human life.

The thermometer, during these noon-day calms, often marked as high as 88° of Fahrenheit in the shade and 104° in the sun. At such times our progress was slow, and we often stopped under the shadow of some overhanging tree and indulged in a general *siesta*.

Towards evening we reached a new offshoot of the Usumasinta, flowing towards the north, and called *Rio Chico*. The point of divergence was marked by a promontory of some elevation, supporting an inhabited hut almost buried in the thick

* A singular and undescribed species, called *bits* by the Indians. The fruit is siliquose, like the tamarind, and ripens in August.

foliage. Here we stopped for the night. A fire was lighted, and our stock of provisions brought up from the boat—that is to say, such scant supply as our fishing and shooting during the day had afforded us. With these and a few *tortillas* obtained in exchange for tobacco, we made up our meal. The occupants of the hut watched its preparation and disappearance, with that silent and distrustful curiosity which the presence of a foreigner seems always to inspire in the secluded inhabitants of these countries, and which neither kindness nor long acquaintanceship is successful in overcoming.

Hardly had we finished our repast when we were startled by the sudden barking of dogs in the neighborhood of the hut. In countries like this, such sounds have a sinister significance. Our host leaped up, listened a moment, and then seizing his gun rushed outside. "Es un tigre!" he exclaimed, as he disappeared through the doorway. We instinctively armed ourselves with such weapons as were at hand, and followed. The night was intensely dark, for the moon had not yet risen; but the youngest son of our host, lighting a torch, courageously took the lead, and guided us toward the nearest thicket, whence the sounds which we had heard seemed to proceed.

By the aid of a *machete* we soon effected a clearing, when we discovered one of the dogs of our host stretched on the ground fearfully lacerated. At the sound of his master's voice the poor animal endeavored to rise, turned a dying glance towards the woods beyond, made an ineffectual effort to bark, and fell down dead. His back had been broken by the paw of the jaguar, which had escaped into the depths of the forest. It was useless to attempt pursuit, so we retraced our steps with a feeling of mingled disappointment and relief; while the Indian set fire to the thicket without reflecting that he was thereby endangering the safety of his own hut. The bamboos blazed and crackled like straw, and the fire spread for a considerable distance. As it shot up in spires and shed its fitful

glare on the forest, we fancied that we saw myriads of frightful shapes starting out from the darkness and then retreating again in demoniac glee. But fortunately the hut of the Indian, our refuge for the night, escaped the conflagration.

I had hoped to obtain here the rest of which I was so greatly in need, and early sought repose. The hut contained but one room, divided into several compartments by mosquito nets, resembling the steerage berths of a ship. A gun, two *machetes*, a few earthen and wooden vessels, and a scant supply of provisions suspended from the rafters, constituted all the movable effects of the inhabitants; but, on the other hand, their landed property was considerable, for it was without bounds! In a corner some brands were burning, sending out a dense smoke, which was intended to be a preventive against mosquitos. But notwithstanding this precaution, which rendered the atmosphere hot and almost intolerable, these pests came in by thousands, with the freedom of the wind, through every crevice of the hut! The imprecations of our host, who tossed about restlessly in his hammock, and who was continually making efforts to destroy his persecutors by slapping violently the exposed parts of his person, proved to me that the epidermis of the Indians is not more impervious than our own!

At last, my efforts to get asleep proving fruitless, I got up and left the abominable den in which we were imprisoned. Pedrito, the oldest son of our host, a youth of fourteen or fifteen years, with whom I had struck up a little acquaintance after the alarm of the jaguar, seemed equally restless, and followed me to the banks of the river. The present of a cigar disposed him to be confidential, and I soon put him entirely at his ease by questioning him on subjects with which he was familiar; that is to say, about the productions of the country, the animals infesting the forests, and the occupations of his family. He spoke Spanish very well, and as he appeared intelligent and communicative for an Indian, I took pleasure in

drawing him out. At the end of half an hour we became great friends; he in turn questioning me, and listening without distrust to my replies. Suddenly he interrupted me in the middle of a sentence, by pointing to a grove which we overlooked from the high point where we were seated. "Hark, señor!" he exclaimed; "did you not hear something?"

"I fancied that I heard the moan of some wild animal," was my reply.

"It is not an animal," he rejoined in a mysterious tone, placing his fore-finger on his lips. A few notes in a louder key proved the truth of his assertion.

"Then it is a bird, I suppose?"

He did not reply, but bent over the promontory and with neck stretched forward, and listening ear, seemed absorbed in profoundest contemplation. When, however, I repeated my inquiry, he answered in a low voice, that he now saw the bird in the bushes.

The interest which he evidently felt, communicated itself to me, as I was convinced that the bird which could thus arrest his attention must be both curious and rare. "Do not move," I said, rising quietly, "I will go for my gun." But Pedrito, without uttering a word, motioned me not to leave.

I should have disturbed myself unnecessarily had I done so, for at that moment the bird, as if suspecting my design, flew out of the grove toward the opposite shore, where his voice became confounded with the murmur of the river.

"Well!" I said, "now that it is gone, you will at least tell me its name?"

"It is a *buho*, señor," replied Pedrito, with animation. "Of course you have heard of the *buho*."*

"In truth, I fancied it was a bird of that species; but had this one any peculiar merit?"

Pedrito raised his eyes timidly to mine, and I imagined

* A species of owl, called *tecolote* by the Indians.

that I discovered in his glance a shade of doubt or distrust, which I hastened to dissipate by the offer of another cigar.

"Do you not know, señor," he replied, carefully putting away his present, "do you not know that the *buho* has miraculous powers; that he can make his master rich, cure him of sickness, and win for him the heart of the woman he loves?"

"Indeed!" I rejoined, "I was ignorant of all this; come, explain the whole matter to me, so that I may profit by your knowledge, should I ever be able to get this wonderful bird!"

Thus encouraged, the young Indian proceeded to tell me all that he knew of the *buho*. He enjoined, in case I ever became its fortunate possessor, to give it every care and attention, since its death, if the result of negligence, would be sure to be followed by the greatest misfortunes. He added, that to obtain one without injuring it, required such a combination of fortunate circumstances, that with all his anxiety to possess a *buho*, he had never succeeded in securing one.

These details interested me, in spite of their childishness, reminding me of an ancient superstition mentioned by the old Spanish historians. The Indians of Honduras, according to Herrara, had the art of evoking the evil spirit, who appeared to them in the form of a quadruped or bird, with which they entered into such intimate relations that the death of the one was invariably followed by the immediate death of the other.* It was substantially the same superstition which I encountered the banks of the Usumasinta, making allowance for the modifications it had undergone during the lapse of ages. When Pedrito had concluded his recital, I inquired whence he had derived such valuable information. He mentioned the name of one of his uncles residing at *Jonuta*, as his authority.

* Herrara, Dec. iv. l. viii. c. 4. See also Torquemada, who asserts positively that, "Viniendo á los ageüros que tenian, digo que eran sin cuento; creian en aves nocturnos, especialmente en el *Buho* y en los mochuelos, . . etc."—*Monarchia Ind.*, t. ii., l. vi, c. 48.

"But," I inquired smilingly, "in solitudes like these, where are the maidens to be found for your birds to charm?"

As he was about to reply, a bright light suddenly flashed on the water, and on looking in the direction of the hut we saw its occupants moving about with torches in their hands, and at the same moment we heard a confused murmur like that from a camp surprised by an enemy. Thinking that the jaguar had again made his appearance, we hastened back, but before we could reach the hut Pedrito's father called out to us to stop. We obeyed, full of apprehension and unable to understand the mysterious injunction. Suddenly the young Indian, all of whose faculties had been on the alert, seized my arm and in a tremulous voice exclaimed, "Do not move; it is a serpent!"

"If it be only a serpent," was my rejoinder, "this stick is sufficient for our defense."

"No, no!" he exclaimed, holding me back, "it is the *nahuyaca*; and the *nahuyaca* never forgives!"

There was a moment of suspense, during which every eye searched the ground in order to discover the reptile. Morin proved to be most fortunate, and a shot from his gun broke its back and enabled us to capture it with ease. The Indians regarded it without moving a muscle, or saying a word. But I was delighted beyond measure with the lucky chance which had thus thrown in my way so fine a specimen of this singular and most dreaded of vipers, of which I then supposed we had no accounts except the very imperfect ones left us by the early conquerors. I found out, however, on my return to France, that it had been described briefly by Lacépède, under the name of *vipera Brasiliana*, from a specimen in the Museum. Later, the traveller Spix brought another specimen with him from Brazil, from which M. Schlegel, in his *Essai sur la Physionomie des Serpents*, drew most of the information which we possess concerning it. He gave it the name

of *jararaca*. In Brazil, where they are very numerous, they are of different colors, which has led to some confusion in their description. All of those which I saw during my travels were precisely alike, and seemed to me very similar to the *bothrops surucucu* of Spix. Resembling the rattlesnake in shape and color, its back is ornamented with a longitudinal series of brown spots of trapezoidal shape, relieved by a bright yellow border; its belly is also yellow; its head triangular and flat; and its angular body is endowed with great muscular strength —features which identify it as one of the most deadly of reptiles. The one killed by Morin was nearly two yards in length.*

The fangs of the *jararaca*, slender, long, and capable of being raised considerably by the movement of the maxillars, on penetrating the skin only produce two scarcely perceptible punctures whence escape a few drops of blood, but the wounded part turmefies very rapidly. The absorption of the poison by the blood manifests itself in a general prostration of the system, a burning thirst, retching, and by other symptoms which I have before mentioned. Livid spots soon appear around the wound, forerunners of a gangrene, which spreads rapidly over the whole person, and, sooner or later, ends in death.

There is no security in external or internal remedies against the *jararaca's* bite, for up to the present time no specific has been found for its cure. The only proper course to pursue is carefully to wash the wound, and by tight ligatures above and below it, prevent the virus from infecting the blood. The part should then be scarified or cupped, if possi-

* The discovery of this species of *trigonocephalus* in Central America fills up a chasm in the geographical range of the reptile. It is found in the *tr. atrox* L. in Guiana; in the *tr. lanceolatus* Opp. in Martinique and Santa Lucia; and finally in the *tr. cenchris* Sch. in the southern States of the American Union. These dangerous ophidians are therefore spread all over the inter-tropical portions of the New World, from South Carolina to Brazil. They have not yet been found either in Europe or in Africa.

ble, and cauterized. In a word, it is necessary to neutralize a poison the effects of which it is impossible to contend against. Sudorifics, administered in large doses, complete a course of treatment which one can easily adopt for himself. A traveller, and above all a naturalist, should never move about in these countries unprovided for an emergency of this kind; for safety depends on celerity, and the slightest delay may be followed by fatal results.

In the morning we left this dangerous locality. We had, however, added to our company a dog, which proved to be a most useful acquisition. Fida had short, coarse hair, was of reddish color, and marked like a zebra; her ears were erect, her snout delicate, and altogether she resembled the greyhound in shape, only that she was rather more compact. She was, doubtless, of European extraction; but the breed had evidently been long acclimated under the tropics. She was, perhaps, a descendant (who knows?) of that famous greyhound left on the island of Carmen during the expedition of Grijalva. This dog of ours was, moreover, courageous in the extreme, and full of a rare intelligence, which careful training finally developed to a wonderful degree. I was fortunate enough, but not without great trouble, to carry her with me to France, where, unhappily, her primitive elegance of shape gradually disappeared under the enervating influences of repose and civilization. I would have liked much to take little Pedrito with me also, for the young Indian interested me greatly, but his father refused his consent, not unwisely, as I have often thought since.

We diverged from the Usumasinta, to enter the *Rio Chico*, which, in turn, was abandoned three leagues farther on, for the *Chiquito*, a muddy channel, narrow and stagnant, which communicates with the Lagoon of *Catasaja*. This unfrequented region seemed to me wilder than any we had yet traversed. Monkeys clustering among the vines, clambered to the very tops

of the trees on our approach, in the utmost agitation and alarm. Tapirs, roused from their slumbers, rushed from us in terror, dashing through the forest, regardless of obstructions. Great lizards loosened their hold on the branches of the trees, and fell trembling into the mud; and numberless iguanas, green, purple and brown, scrambled along the banks of the stream, and vanished in their holes. We killed a number; one in particular was of great size and peculiar color, which I considered worthy of preservation; but unfortunately he was so much mutilated by shot, that I reluctantly consigned him to our cook. At one point, perched on the top of a ceiba tree, which time had stripped of its foilage, we perceived the king of the vultures (*Sarcoramphus papa* of Lin.,) a fine bird of black and white plumage, whose head and neck, during the season of mating, are brilliant with the most exquisite colors. He manifested no alarm on our approach, and we did not attempt to molest him. In view of these immense forests of lofty trees, the haunts of wild beasts, strange birds and unknown reptiles, shrouded with vines hanging in festoons from the branches or trailing like serpents along the ground, with the sinister, sad waters of the river in front, so silent that no sound save that of the plunge of the alligator in their depths reached the ear: in view of all these, I experienced a nervous excitement, which kept my imagination in constant activity. Every instant I looked for some new and startling incident, or some strange and marvellous spectacle. As we advanced, the forest by degrees seemed to lose all signs of life; there was a death-like silence; no wind, no current, and the declining rays of the sun glistened on the dead waters as on a mirror of brass. Our oarsmen appeared prostrated, while Morin and myself, bathed in perspiration, reclined listlessly on the deck of the *cayuco*. Nevertheless, the dreariness of the forest was occasionally relieved by the *jolocin*, a tree of great size, bearing immense pink flowers, which blossom before the leaves make their appearance.

About three in the afternoon, we reached the Lagoon of *Catasaja*, a broad sheet of water, surrounded by forests. The mountain of Palenque now became visible, describing a perfect trapezium against the horizon. An hour later, we landed in the province of Chiapa, after having sailed twenty-six leagues from the town of Palizada.

The village of *Las Playas* is built in a little nook formed by the last bend of the mountains. During the rainy season it is encircled by water, and is entirely separated from the surrounding country, except at a point to the southward where runs the road to Palenque. The circle of dry land increases with the return of the dry season; and the lagoon, no longer deriving any supply of water from the little river of *Catasaja*, gradually recedes from the peninsula, and ceases to imprison its inhabitants. We were lodged in the municipal house, or *cabildo*, a kind of caravansery, established in each village by the forethought of a former government for the accommodation of strangers. Twenty or more Indian lazzaroni obstructed the entrance, lying here and there on the floor, where they enjoyed life in a most primitive manner. We were obliged to step over their prone bodies to take possession of our domicil. These barbarians, originally from the mountains of Tumbala, come down from time to time into the plain to exchange the products of their labor for supplies of provisions. They are by no means prepossessing in appearance; their heads rise almost to a point behind; their foreheads are narrow; their limbs large, but their skin is of a tolerably light shade. When here they are intoxicated from morning until night. They speak a language but little understood.

It was at *Las Playas* that I was first consulted as a physician. My patient was a Spaniard of lymphatic temperament, who complained of obesity. He was at least forty-five, yet seemed surprised that he no longer retained the symmetry of his youth! I prescribed diet and exercise, which he did not

seem much to relish, and he left me with ill-concealed contempt for my medical knowledge. I should, doubtless, have produced a much better impression had I ordered a few innocent pills, but one does not acquire the arts of the charlatan in a moment! Yet I learned to practise them later, without serious qualms of conscience. In truth, in a country so full of ignorance and prejudice, it is imprudent to confess a want of knowledge of medicine, for public opinion invests every stranger with the character of a physician; and travellers should always be "up" in this part, which is by no means a difficult one to play!

The day after our arrival, all being in readiness for our excursion to the ruins, we deposited our baggage in a place of safety, and procured guides and animals for the journey. The road to Palenque lies over alluvial ground, which rises gently towards the mountains. For the first two leagues the path is through a virgin forest, full of quagmires. Here the horses are very averse to proceeding, and the traveller has frequently great difficulty in extricating them from the marshes. On issuing from the forests, the *Sierra de la Naranjas*, eight leagues distant, becomes visible. The country here is only a monotonous, dreary savanna. As we passed over it, the heat was overwhelming; not a sound was audible, not even the buzzing of an insect! The blossoms closed their petals, while the leaves were literally shrivelled up by the heat. But as we approached the town of Santo Domingo, the country began to assume a more attractive appearance. The ground was much broken, but covered with verdure. Our road soon after ran over a cluster of wooded hills, then we crossed the *Chimichibol*, a wonderfully limpid stream, on sight of which our horses raised their heads and neighed, for they knew that we were approaching the end of our journey.

All that I had read concerning this retired corner of the globe, had not enabled me to form a just opinion of its true

character. My erudite predecessors, with minds pre-occupied with an historical enigma (the solution of which, however, has thus far evaded their penetration), have treated as valueless accessories the framework or surroundings of the object of their speculations. I was consequently both surprised and delighted with the beauty and picturesqueness of the country. Little houses situated according to the taste of the owner, on the banks of running waters, and magnificently shadowed over by trees, dotted the verdant table land at the base of the mountains. Not having entirely recovered from the disagreeable and sinister impressions produced on my mind by the dismal plains and slimy lagoons which we had just left, I was the more delighted with the change, as well in respect of the inhabitants as in the scenery and whole aspect of the country.

It is true, that later, on visiting those picturesque huts, the chief charms of which had been supplied by distance, and on catching glimpses through the interstices of their walls of the poverty of their inmates, and on visiting those beautiful gardens destitute of useful plants, I revoked my first opinion, and concluded that perfect happiness had not yet found a refuge here. I made the acquaintance, nevertheless, of a true philosopher, whom love of ease had riveted to this spot, and who, by the serenity of his existence, protested against my judgment. Political disturbances had banished him from his own country; chance had led him to Santo Domingo; and when he saw the smiling perspective of the village, half hidden by a bend of the mountain, he exclaimed, "If there be peace on earth surely it is to be found here!" So here he established himself, married, and has since remained. He was a man of middle age, by no means wanting in intelligence, and possessing considerable dignity of character. The disturbances in the neighboring states rarely extend to these regions. The ground is productive, the climate pleasant and salubrious,—that is to say, compared with that of the plain—in fine, peace

reigns here supreme, and peace is a prime element of happiness.

Under the administration of Don Antonio Calderon (1752) Santo Domingo del Palenque, which to-day numbers about six hundred souls, possessed a population three times as great, and was considered as a flourishing little city. But the emancipation of Spanish America dried up the source of its prosperity, by dividing the colonial unity, and modifying commercial traditions. The abandonment of the route through which Santo Domingo derived its principal revenue and commercial movement, when merchandise from Guatemala and Chiapa was sent down the lagoon to Campeachy, struck a mortal blow at the town, and there is little hope that the enterprise of the inhabitants can revive the prosperous days of the past. Nevertheless, Providence, by its liberal endowments, has shown itself unwilling to condemn it to barren isolation; on the contrary its means of communication with the surrounding country are numerous and easy. One road leads almost directly to the centre of Yucatan; another crosses the mountains of *las Naranjas* and *Tumbala* to San Christobal, the chief town of the province. Peten may be reached by the Rio Usumasinta, embarking either at *Chables* or *Balancan*, and Tabasco is accessible by way of Las Playas—the route by which we had come. The rivers *Michol* and *Chacamas*, which take their rise in the neighboring *sierras*, and run in opposite directions, are navigable at a distance of four leagues from Santo Domingo, and afford other facilities for intercommunication. The first-named stream communicates with the Grijalva by the river *Tulija;* it has, however, no tributaries, and is only navigable for *cayucos*. The second is of greater depth, and flows directly into the Usumasinta.

Notwithstanding the fertility of the district, which is almost equal to that of the alluvions, the cattle of the people constitute their chief wealth. The soil, mixed with sand and

vegetable manure and irrigated by numerous little streams, is well adapted for the culture of tobacco. That which is now grown is good but could be greatly improved by care and skill in its cultivation. Unfortunately, the inhabitants of the country are by no means enterprising; they are unwilling to abandon their traditional routine, and are incapable of awakening from their apathy, unless stimulated by foreign energy. This has sometimes been productive of good; but I must add that envy and ingratitude have almost always been the reward of the endeavors that have been made to instruct them, or ameliorate their condition.

My first act on arriving at Santo Domingo was to call for a glass of its water, which has a great reputation for excellence. The inhabitants give the preference, over the limpid liquid of their streams, to the water derived from holes bored in the ground at the foot of the hills. The dampness of the woods furnishes a constant supply to these reservoirs, which are always favorite resorts of the people. In retired places deep excavations may be seen, where the women bathe during the heat of the day. Here they gather, like their more fortunate sisters in other lands, not, it is true, in gilded saloons on brocaded lounges, but beneath great trees festooned with vines, on mossy banks, and indulge in protracted lustrations, braiding their long hair and smoking their cigarettes the while, in garbs as primitive as that of the sea-born Venus and the Naiads! Here they remain during the day, but when the sun sinks beneath the waving fringe of trees, they put on their blue skirts, fill their pitchers, and wend homewards, chatting and laughing all the way. These women are really beautiful, but their appeal is rather to the senses than to the affections.

I called on the alcalde on the day of my arrival, to obtain permission to visit the ruins. This magistrate had been described to me as an inexorable Cerberus. He certainly was

no friend to scientific exploration, and had but a poor notion of the merits of strangers. It was at his instigation that all access to the ruins was forbidden, except under the guidance of some person of note resident in the vicinity. Later, after I saw the mutilation which these precious monuments had undergone, I was constrained to approve of the precautions of the alcalde. If the masterpieces of Italy or Greece be removed from their native soil little harm is done, for their value is in themselves; but to mutilate, through ridiculous vanity, these rude American sculptures, the chief merit of which lies in their mysterious origin, is to profane them without a shadow of excuse. I admire the *bas-reliefs* of Palenque on the front of its old palaces; they interest and impress me; but when transported to the galleries of the Louvre, they appear to be only the rude designs of an uncultivated people, and I look on them with coldness and indifference. Their destruction hitherto has placed travellers in an unfortunate position, in arousing the ill will and suspicion of the authorities, and causing the people, by way of retaliation, to commit many acts of injustice and outrage on strangers. It was in this spirit that some plaster models taken on the spot by an American archæologist were destroyed, thus depriving science of a collection of *fac-similes* of great interest.*

The alcalde, to whom I bore a letter, kindly granted me every privilege which I asked. Morin and myself, therefore, on the morning after my arrival, set out on our expedition, accompanied by an old hidalgo, who, for thirty years, had been

* Cupidity is not always the motive for these acts of spoliation. In many instances they result from the desire of persons to bring back mementos of their travels. Our neighbors (the English) have acquired an unenviable reputation in this respect. They have carried off whole monuments piece by piece. One eccentric Englishman, in particular, is mentioned as having mutilated every statue he saw in the valley of the Nile, and was arrested, by order of the Viceroy, barely in time to prevent his breaking off the nose of the great Sesostris himself!—See *Guisquet's Egypt*, vol. ii., p. 660.

the *cicerone* of the ruins, and who still preserved the dignity of manner and the hospitable virtues belonging to a preceding generation. We rode the distance of a league over an uneven and wooded country; the rest of our journey was performed on foot through the forest. On our way, Morin killed a second *nahuyaca*, and Señor Gonzales, our guide, confirmed all that we had previously heard concerning the bite of the reptile. He added that Providence had given the antidote with the bane, plucking, while he spoke, ten steps from the expiring serpent, a branch of the *guaco*, a specific against serpent bites celebrated throughout tropical America. This plant grows in great abundance on the shaded ground near Palenque. There are three varieties, white, green, and purple; the latter is the most highly esteemed, though, in point of fact, it differs in nothing from the other varieties, except in the color of its leaves. The *guaco* is taken internally, as an essence or tincture. My faith in its efficacy is very limited, although it has been cited as producing marvellous cures. A little further on we saw a colossal *arum*, which drew from me an exclamation of admiration. Señor Gonzales attributed a singular virtue to this plant, that of causing the fangs of venomous serpents to fall out by its simple touch. Without entering into a discussion with him on this point, I respectfully approached the plant and measured its leaves, each of which was two yards in length by one and a half in breadth, and capable of affording shade to three persons!

Already there were indications of the ruins being near at hand, but the density of the forest concealed them from our view. At last we ascended a steep elevation covered with *debris*, and found ourselves at the portal of a vast edifice, which we had not even perceived a few seconds before. It was the principal front of the building called the Palace. A double gallery of eighty yards in length, sustained by massive pillars, opened before us. The walls, singularly enough, in-

clined toward each other from the architrave, forming an acute angle, the point of which, seven feet from the ground, was truncated by a final horizontal layer of stones. This original mode of construction, which discloses the principle of the arch, was not wanting in grandeur or boldness of design, although the architects did not understand the science of curves, and stopped short, so to speak, on the verge of the discovery. Firmly built on a pyramidal foundation twenty feet in height, this palace is surmounted by a quadrangular tower of three stories, distinguished from each other by as many lines of cornice. With the first view of its outlines, I was overcome by a feeling of surprise and admiration, which riveted me to the spot. There was no tradition connected with this monument; nothing to explain its origin! It was there, standing in the bosom of solitude, in all the majesty of bygone ages. From the entrance, where we had stopped to survey it, we directed our glances to an inner court full of gigantic idols, half concealed by wild vegetation. The rest of the edifice was hidden in the depths of the forest, and it was impossible to judge precisely of its size and shape. A short distance to the north of the Palace, grouped on isolated eminences, are other monuments, equally remarkable for the solidity of their construction, the stern simplicity of their architecture, and the mystery which enshrouds their primitive purposes. Bushes and creeping plants spread over them a mantle of verdure; and enormous trees grow on them, exciting surprise that they are able to sustain the weight. The table land, besides, for a considerable distance around, is covered with ruins, which have been only partially explored. We devoted the whole of our first day here to a rapid examination of these antiquities. Señor Gonzales departed next morning, and Morin and myself were left alone in these mysterious solitudes. I must confess that I bade adieu to this amiable gentleman with secret satisfaction. I needed time for reflection, and wanted an entire personal

independence fully to enjoy the interesting objects that surrounded me.

As soon as we were alone, we commenced clearing away the rubbish around the Palace with the greatest activity. We selected as a residence the eastern gallery, installing ourselves in the lower story, which opens directly on the forest. With the materials at hand, we constructed a rude fire-place, and established in one corner the simple requirements of a kitchen. A broad, polished stone served as a table; the forest supplied us with large coriaceous leaves, bark and vines, all of which we turned to account. We arranged our beds in the subterranean chambers, which, it is said, were used as sepulchres. Then, repairing the stairway, we made an opening to admit the air and the sun, and lighted a fire to dispel the damp. Here we resolved to remain as long as it suited our pleasure. These labors occupied the whole of our second day. When the shades of evening began to fall, numberless bats flitted out of the ruins and fluttered around us. I saw here two distinct species, of different sizes, but both of the *vespertilio* family.

It would be superfluous to give a description of these monuments of Palenque, above all, of the Palace, a vast parallelogram, very complicated in its arrangements, which covers an area of three thousand eight hundred and forty square yards. I will not, therefore, repeat what the reader can find better detailed in works specially devoted to American antiquities.* All that can be said about them in their present condition has been said; but their past opens an illimitable field for speculation, in which every one may wander, and I shall avail myself of this privilege to venture, in my turn, upon a few conjectures which a personal examination of the ruins and certain historical conjunctions have suggested to me.

* See particularly the three memoirs of Dupaix, in the *Recueil des Antiquites Mexicaines*, the travels of Stephens, the views of Catherwood, and the great and costly work of Lord Kingsborough.

Whether the discovery of these ruins was due to chance, or to a divine revelation made to the Indians, as is asserted in the country, one thing is certain, that they were never mentioned before the year 1750, during the term of Don Antonio Calderon's administration in Chiapa. As tradition was silent concerning the name which they had borne, they were given that of the nearest village, *Santo Domingo de Palenque.* It is, therefore, over a century since their existence became an established fact.

The news of their discovery excited considerable interest in Spain, as is proved by the two explorations made by order of the government of that kingdom, in 1784 and 1785.* It was then ascertained that the ancient city covered a large space of country, situated on the northern declivity of one of the ridges of the Cordilleras, which separate Guatemala from the provinces of Tabasco and Chiapa. It was not, however, until eighteen years afterwards that Charles IV., of Spain, caused a careful *reconnaisance* to be made of them, the results of which long remained unknown. Forgotten in the archives of Mexico, during the period of the revolution, the three memorials of Captain Dupaix and the drawings of his companion, Castañeda, became finally, by exchange, the property of a Frenchman, Mr. Baradere, who published them in 1834, in a work called *Receuil des Antiquités Mexicaines.* This document is the most interesting and curious of anything we possess concerning the ruins of Palenque. After a lapse of twenty-six years, two enterprising travellers, Messieurs Waldeck (1834) and Stephens (1843), completed the work of Dupaix, by adding to it many valuable details, and by giving us *fac-similes* of the hieroglyphic tablets, neglected by their predecessors.

There exist in several places in Yucatan substantial indi-

* Those of Bernasconi and Del Rio. The expedition of the latter alone was productive of any result, but only in the form of a brief and superficial sketch or memorial.

cations of early civilization quite as remarkable as those of Palenque. Why then have the latter been singled out as the only ones worthy the attention of the inquiring and scientific world? It is because the monuments of Yucatan are not enveloped in mystery, while those of Palenque appeal to the imagination, instead of to the remembrance. The imposing grandeur of these ruins; the majesty of the forests surrounding them; the almost sullen silence of the Indians; and the absence of all traditions, have induced a supposition that they are of great antiquity. It is known that this region was uninhabited as long ago as when Cortez traversed it, on his march against Honduras. "There was no road whatever," says Bernal Diaz, in describing this journey; "we were obliged to clear the way with our hands and swords. The country was so thickly wooded, and the trees were so lofty, that we could scarcely see the sky. We climbed the tallest trees in vain efforts to catch a view of the country around." Cortez crossed the Grijalva at Istapa, and consequently was but a short distance from the town of Palenque, which even then had ceased to exist, for had there been any city of importance here, it would not have escaped the observation of an army suffering from famine, and following Indian guides, who were searching for food with all the eagerness of despair. It was only after a long and painful march that the expedition escaped from this fearful wilderness.

But admitting that in the year 1524, these ruins existed nearly in their present condition in the forests of Chiapa, it by no means follows that a fabulous age and origin should be ascribed to them. When first discovered, Yucatan was a flourishing and populous country, abounding with public edifices built of hewn stones laid in mortar, the extent and beauty of which greatly impressed the Spaniards. Besides the testimony of contemporaneous historians, we have that of the soldiers of Grijalva, who, in their enthusiastic admiration,

called the country after their native land, which they fancied it resembled. These public edifices no longer exist; war, fanaticism, and political feuds have all combined to destroy them; but their remains are still scattered over the whole extent of the peninsula, from the island of Cozumel to the frontiers of Peten and Tabasco.* They are evidently the remains of the same structures which arrested the attention of the conquerors, and the number of which, according to Herrara, "was frightful to contemplate."† Now, it can easily be demonstrated, by comparing the ruins of Yucatan with those of Palenque, that the monuments of which they are the remains, were of the same general style of architecture, and constructed on the same principles, and in conformity with the same rules of art. The plans of them all, their pyramidal bases, the absence of arched roofs, the use of stucco and painting in their decoration, the bas-reliefs sculptured on their walls, and the resemblance between their hieroglyphical symbols, indicate, even in their minutest details, a conformity of ideas, and of taste, the expression of which may have varied according to the time and place, without, however, losing their primitive and eminently national character.‡

The analogy can no longer be denied between these ruins and the monuments of Mexico which tradition attributes to the Toltecs.§ These comparisons, which I have not space to prosecute in detail, show the action and preponderance of a

* The city of Merida, for example, was partly built at the expense of the aboriginal monuments, and the convent of the Franciscans actually occupies the spot which was formerly consecrated to one of the *adoratorios* of the God *Tihoo*.

† "En todas las Provincias se han hallado tantos y tan grandes edificios de canteria que espanta."—*Herrara*, Dec. 4, l. x. c. 2.

‡ Ruins of *Labpak*, Palenque, *Xochicalco*.

§ When, for example, the temples of *Mitla* are compared with the ruins of *Zaya*, of *Tuloom*, and of *Chunchum*, the simple and noble architecture of the Toltecs will be detected, including the columns which have so astonished the *savants*.—Compare *Stephens*, vol. ii., pp. 17, 21, 132, 413.

common race over the whole territory lying between Cape Catoche and the Mexican table land.

The question of origin thus decided, we are next enabled to form some conjectures as to the antiquity of Palenque. We find that the Toltecs, in the middle of the seventh century, were in possession of Anahuac, where civilization peaceably developed itself. Later, about the year 1052, they abandoned this region and emigrated in a south-easterly direction—that is to say, into the provinces of Oaxaca and Chiapa. It is easy enough, therefore, to arrive at the conclusion that Palenque was founded at this time, and was consequently contemporaneous with *Mitla*.

It is well known that the migration of the Toltecs extended to Guatemala and Yucatan, where they introduced their national architecture and their taste for gigantic pyramidal structures, full of an indigenous grandeur, but not at all analogous with those of the Egyptians. History is silent concerning the state of the peninsula at this period. We are ignorant even as to its being inhabited. As no traces of its people are to be found, we must conclude that if any existed, the Toltecs rapidly absorbed them all. Thus, the city of *Mayapan*, which two centuries later became the centre of a well-organized society, remarkable for the gentleness of its manners and the wisdom of its institutions, was doubtless the work of the intelligent people to whom are attributed the monuments of Anahuac.

Here may be cited appropriately a paragraph from Herrara, which enables us to add a few conjectures to the meagre information furnished to us by tradition.

"While the inhabitants of Mayapan," says this author, "lived in peace and prosperity, there arrived from the south, from the heights of *Lacandon*, a large number of people originally from Chiapa, who, after having wandered forty years in the wilderness, finally settled ten leagues from Mayapan, at the

base of the mountains, where they built magnificent edifices and conformed to the laws and customs of the country."* Who were those strangers who so quietly invaded the country, who practised the arts of peace, who increased and multiplied, and finally became confounded with the original population? They evidently belonged to an already civilized family, which from ties of consanguinity were attracted to the people of Yucatan. Who knows but that these emigrants, in quest of a new country, were originally from the mountains where now stand the ruins of Palenque? Who knows but these were the inhabitants of that same city which was destroyed by a catastrophe such as afterwards reduced Mayapan to ruins? Supposing such to have been the fact, the event must have taken place some time between the years 1250 and 1420—the dates of the foundation and destruction of Mayapan.

These last conclusions are, of course, mere hypotheses. I do not claim for them any other value than that attaching to curious coincidences. The other suggestions which I have thrown out, and which I shall briefly sum up, are, perhaps, worthy of attention. If the undisputable analogy be considered which exists between the ancient monuments of Mexico and the ruins of Palenque, and between the latter and those of Yucatan, and if we consider also the geographical position of these ruins, spread over the line of Toltec emigration, and bearing evidences of antiquity the more marked, because they are less distant from the original point of departure—if all this be considered, it will doubtless be granted that these different works were from the hands of the same people who successively built Tula, Mitla, Palenque, Mayapan, and all the edifices now in ruins on this peninsula. The Indians of Yucatan, the Mayas, could have had no other ancestors.† This

* Herrara, Dec. 4, l. x. c. 2.

† The destruction of Mayapan only preceded by seventy years the arrival of the Spaniards.

presumption is strengthened by the ancient manners of the people, whose gentleness of character and whose religion remained long unchanged, even under the influence of the Aztecs.* Moreover, the Toltec race is not extinct in Guatemala, where it constitutes, in the mountainous regions, a proud, but nevertheless, laborious and industrious population, which glories in its ancient origin.

The site of Palenque was admirably chosen. From those heights, now covered with impenetrable undergrowth, but which were formerly crowned with edifices of primitive magnificence, the eye traverses a plain comprising an infinite succession of forests and savannas, and extending far away to the distant shore of Catasaja. Its prince, from the tower of his palace, could overlook the whole city and its environs as far as the horizon. He could keep watch over the movements of an enemy, or survey the course of public prosperity around him. Who can doubt that these solitudes once echoed with all the sounds of busy life; that these ruined temples once witnessed the pomps and ceremonies of sacrifices; that these steps were once crowded with fantastically-costumed warriors, such as we see portrayed on the bas-reliefs which have survived them, as well as by courtiers and by beauties, powerful and celebrated;—who can doubt, in a word, that these domains, which have now returned under the sway of nature, once pulsated with the living tide of an indigenous civilization? Let us beware, however, of an exaggerating enthusiasm, and let us not over-estimate the skill of the architects of the monuments of Palenque! It is difficult to believe that a people, ignorant of the arts of analyzing sound, and reproducing it by writing, who did not understand the use of iron, who possessed neither flocks nor beasts of burden—it is difficult, I say, to believe that such a people could ever have attained a degree

* Herrara, Dec. 4, l. x. c. 2.

Fig. 1.—Basso-relievo.—Palenque.

Fig. 2.—Carved Chalchiuitl—Ocosingo.

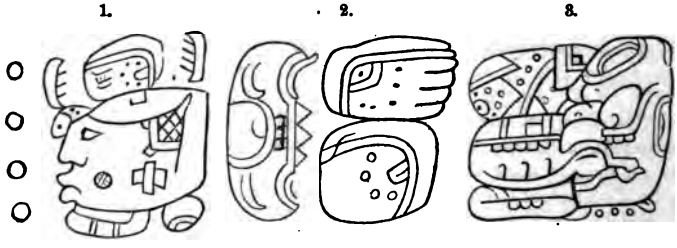
of culture at all comparable with modern civilization. Let us add, that the ruins of Palenque have been, perhaps, too much eulogized. They are magnificent certainly in their antique boldness and strength; they are invested by the solitude which surrounds them with an air of indescribable but imposing grandeur; but I must say, without contesting their architectural merit, that they do not justify, in their details, all the enthusiasm of archæologists. The ornamental lines are wanting in regularity, the drawings in symmetry, and the sculpture in finish. I must, however, make an exception in favor of the symbolical tablets, the sculpture of which struck me as remarkably accurate.* As to the faces, their rude execution

* Among the *bas-reliefs* of Palenque, one of the most interesting is that represented in the engraving facing this page, Fig. 1. The tablet is four feet long, and three wide, and around it are the remains of a rich stucco border. The principal figure sits cross-legged on a couch, ornamented with heads of the ocelot, with one hand raised as if in gesticulation, or in the act of making some mystical sign. Altogether it bears a marked resemblance to the representations of Buddha, in many of the sculptures of India, and may be taken as the figure of *Cuculcan*, the beneficent demi-god of the Central American nations, adored also in Mexico as *Quetzalcoatl*—this being only a Mexican translation of the Tzendal or Toltecan name, signifying plumed or feathered serpent. This *bas-relief*, from the drawing of Catherwood, is introduced here to facilitate comparison with a very beautiful miniature representation of the same subject (Fig. 2), obtained from the ruins of Ocosingo, forty miles to the southward of Palenque, in 1856. It is engraved full size of the original, which is of the variety of beautiful green stone, called by the Spaniards *Madre de Esmeralda*, or Mother of Emerald, and which was highly esteemed by the ancient Indians under the name of *chalchiuitl*. It is very hard, and when polished resembles the finest kind of green enamel. Some experts pronounce the material green quartz; but Sir Roderick Murchison recognizes it as *nephrite* or *jade*. The figure is sharply cut, in high relief, and the whole is exquisitely polished. A hole is drilled through the stone between the points *a a*, evidently for the purpose of suspension; and we are no doubt right in supposing that it was worn supported on the breast of some sacerdotal dignitary, perhaps the high priest of *Cuculcan*, whose image it bears. In connection with this relic were found a number of others of the same material, and scarcely inferior in interest. Among them may be mentioned a cylinder, two inches in diameter, resembling those obtained in the Assyrian ruins, with hieroglyph-

proves them to be the early attempts of an art yet in its infancy. The bas-relief, known as the *stone of the cross*, deserves mention as one of the most meritorious. Torn by profane hands from the sanctuary which sheltered it, and left at the foot of a hill where it is gradually becoming destroyed—the enigma of this historical fragment has long occupied the attention of *savants*. They have fancied they could distinguish among the objects it represents the symbols of the worship of Memphis, and then again those of the Christian religion. But I think it will be well to await the coming of a second Champollion to furnish us with the key to American hieroglyphics; and, until then, to see in this stone only an Indian allegory, of which the leading representations were suggested by the products of the country.

Contemplating these ruins from another point of view, they deeply impress us with the nothingness of humanity, and the vanity of man's attempts to perpetuate his own glory. We find ourselves face to face with these antique personages, whose

ics engraved on its outer surface. These are represented in the accompanying cut, of full size.



As already said, these green stones, or *chalchiuites*, were held in the highest estimation by the ancient Mexicans and Central Americans. Among the presents which Montezuma gave to Cortez for the King of Spain were some of these stones. Bernal Diaz reports Montezuma as saying, in handing them over, "To this I will add a few *chalchihuis*, of such enormous value, that I could not consent to give them to any one except to such a powerful emperor as yours. Each of these stones is worth two loads of gold."—*T.*

handiwork has survived them, without being able to determine their date or origin, without knowing whence they came or whither they have gone! A few years more and even these mute testimonials will themselves have disappeared. Travellers are hastening to complete their destruction, as if the disintegrating forces of nature were not equal to the task. Where now are the bas-reliefs in stucco so admired by Dupaix? and those allegorical sculptures which have been the source of so much learned discussion? What have become of the medallions which adorned the peristyle of the great Palace? The first are forever obliterated; the others have been mutilated or torn from the walls to which they were attached. If some faint vestiges of them still remain, it is due rather to the depredations of time which, by mutilating them in parts, have preserved them from the ruder hands of travellers. It is true the latter have undertaken to indemnify us, by inscribing their own names in the places of the inscriptions which they have obliterated!

We passed a fortnight in the solitudes of Palenque, the remembrance of which will never be effaced from my memory. We hunted, we spread snares for wild animals, we collected plants, shells and butterflies, of which there were infinite varieties, without ever becoming weary of admiring the beauties of nature, or of wandering among the ruins which have kept the secret of their origin so well. Morin, whose intelligence was undeveloped, here began to perceive new worlds opening before him, and to take great interest in the study of natural history. He carefully put by a store of *cocuyos*,* or fireflies, which he determined to take with him to France, imagining that the phosphorescent eyes of these insects would always continue bright!

The mornings here were delightful. Humming birds darted among the vines which twined themselves around the walls of

* *Elater noctilucus* Fabr.

the old palace, while green and purple dragon-flies darted about in rapid and capricious flight. The gnats, at the same time, emerged in clouds from the depths of the undergrowth; the woodpecker commenced his ringing stroke on the trunks of decaying trees, and the whole forest became full of the sights and sounds of life and motion. But at midday everything became again silent and motionless; all animation seemed suspended beneath the ardor of the solar rays, notwithstanding the impenetrable mass of verdure which arched over all; and only the monotonous murmur of the river, which flows at the foot of the ruins, broke the death-like silence.

When night fell, however, the ruins appeared to be enchanted, and I can well conceive that the superstitious terrors of the Indians would prevent their remaining here in the darkness. They imagine that the place is haunted by the spirits of its early occupants; that by moonlight the bas-reliefs become invested with life, and that the warriors step out of their stone frames and stalk through the sombre galleries. . . . . For my own part, although without fear of these nocturnal visitors, there were times when I could not avoid some little superstitious emotion. Tiny, winged lamps seemed floating in the atmosphere, first with the brilliancy of a spark, then with a fugitive brightness which lost itself in a train of light; at the same time undefinable sounds seemed to proceed from all parts of the woods—not terrific like those which startled me on the banks of the Usumasinta, but soft and sweet like the music of birds, and as mysterious as the accents of an unknown tongue. I seemed to detect life in all things around me; the plants, the trees, the old walls themselves, appeared imbued with its spirit, and to speak a language of their own. My ears listened with rapt attention to this strange harmony, and my eyes questioned the darkness, but in vain, to discover the beings who thus manifested their existence. Now it was like the silvery tinkle of a little bell, or a plaintive voice calling in the

distance, then a rustling sound, and next a sob from the interior of the ruins. Again, it was like a thousand gentle whispers, a thousand little cadences, celebrating, in a universal concert, the coolness and magnificence of the night. At one time I surprised a frog on the staircase, whose croakings had mystified us, from its resemblance to the barking of a dog. Even Fida had been equally deceived with ourselves, and during our first night in the ruins had kept up a reciprocal chorus with this inhabitant of the stream.

Our mode of life was very regular. As soon as daylight began to disappear, we lighted a great fire under the peristyle. Morin then prepared supper, and we did not retire until sleep weighed down our eyelids. Seated on the ruined staircase, we enjoyed to the fullest extent the cool evening air, fragrant from the forest, thinking over, the while, the events of the day or contemplating silently the evolutions of phosphorescent insects. Sometimes a sudden breath of wind would cause the tall trees to tremble, and make our fire blaze up more brightly. The shadows would move about as if endowed with life; our dog would drowsily raise her head, and we would listen and wait, full of that kind of nervous suspense which accompanies the expectation of something to come, one knows not what. And when, at a later hour, we left the gallery for our subterranean bed-chamber, the dying embers of our fire would cast a red glare down the steep stairway leading to the forest, and on the neighboring vegetation, causing the darkness beyond to appear all the more profound, and to throw out in greater distinctness the little insect lights which glittered like stars on its ebon bosom. Altogether, the place was one of solemn beauty, heightened by the solitude and seclusion, and appealing with double force to the educated mind from its mysterious associations.

One day, I heard in the neighborhood some notes which arrested my attention; they were clear, limpid, and full of

cadence, such as those produced by a musical box. As singing birds are rare in this part of the country, I concluded that these sounds proceeded from a wonderful variety of which the Indians had spoken to me, and which, according to their traditions, is only to be found in places where there are ruins. I shouldered my gun with the liveliest satisfaction, and started in pursuit of the unseen musician. After listening a few moments, I found that the ærial voice proceeded from the banks of the stream. I slid down the embankment towards it with the greatest precaution; but the bird had already changed his position, and was singing on a neighboring hill, which I ascended without feeling in the least discouraged. From the hill, as the note seemed to recede, I went down into the valley beyond, paying little attention to the new scenery which surrounded me. I left behind me the tumuli and *debris* which usually served us as land-marks, following from thicket to thicket, from glade to glade, the object of my ardent wishes. Frequently his notes seemed just above my head, sounding distinct and loud like a song of triumph. I gradually became imbued with that feverish anxiety so common to hunters, and still more so among naturalists. I searched for the bird on every branch, and frequently believed myself so close to him that my piece was raised to fire, when his note, sounding far away, would confound but not discourage me. Finally his song seemed to recede farther and farther, until only a feeble echo reached my ear. At last even this ceased, leaving me alone, and bewildered in the dense forest. At first I experienced no feeling of apprehension. I remained quiet, and listened for some time, until I found there was no longer any hope, and that the provoking bird with his siren song had indeed disappeared. Then I mechanically retraced my steps, wending my way, as I supposed, in the direction whence I had come. I continued on my course for a while without anxiety, diverted as I was by the varieties of plants and in-

sects which I encountered in my path. After a while, however, I observed that the path was altogether strange and unfamiliar. The forest was free from undergrowth, the ground broken, and immense trees, with pyramidal trunks and wide-spreading arms, shadowed over a multitude of dwarf palms of the height of our fern trees. I became alarmed and hurriedly ascended a high point of ground near by and looked anxiously in all directions; but I saw nothing except the foliage of the great forest, and heard nothing but the beating of my own heart. With sudden energy and in alarm, I made an effort to climb to the top of a tree. Alas! after I had succeeded in doing so, I was terrified in the extreme to find only an ocean of verdure before my eyes, which appeared to extend to the very horizon, and seemed limitless.

I descended and shouted for my companion. But finding this unavailing, I seated myself at the foot of a tree and pressing my hands against my head endeavored to devise some means of escape from my dreadful situation; but I could not concentrate my thoughts. All my faculties seemed paralyzed, the blood appeared to rush to my head, and I was morally incapable of a single effort. The position of a man lost in a wilderness is cruelly dramatic, and can only be appreciated by one who has himself endured the agony of mind which it entails. I know not how long my mental faculties continued prostrated; but after a time I rose full of the worst forebodings, yet with a fixed plan of action. There was no fear of darkness overtaking me for several hours, which would afford ample time for me to retrace my steps. This I set about doing in the following manner. I selected the spot where I was standing as a point of departure, and determined, happen what might, never to lose sight of it for a moment. A colossal tree, the bark of which I whitened, and some stones which I piled up at its base, marked the spot and rendered it visible at a distance. My purpose was now to walk in a right line

in every direction from this central point, until I encountered some sign of the ancient city.

Persuaded as I was that I had strayed to the eastward of the ruins, I walked, as I supposed, in that direction, marking as I went certain trees, and breaking down the branches around me, to indicate my course. After several attempts to fix my direction, I reached a piece of swampy ground covered with *arums* and *scitamineæ*. There were no longer any ligneous plants to be seen, and fancying that I had reached the confines of the wood, I crossed the marsh, where the broken stalks preserved the traces of my footsteps. I now beheld with pleasure the azure roof of the firmament, which seemed to smile on me while affording me free air and light. But I advanced in vain; no change was perceptible in the surrounding objects; there was only the same waving vegetation, the same lustrous leaves, large as those of the bananna tree, filling up the space with their wild luxuriance, and shutting the horizon from view. Finding here nothing that I remembered having seen before, I thought it useless to proceed in this direction, and sadly retraced my steps. As I reached the outskirts of the forest, a clear, musical, and sonorous note rang through its depths, like the ironical voice of an evil spirit. My feelings, on hearing this unexpected call, I can never forget. I know not what superstitious idea crossed my mind, and caused the blood to rush hurriedly through my veins; but I determined not to be misled a second time, but continued my course without even thinking of using my gun against the invisible bird which seemed to make a trial of its power over me by awakening, at different points, the echoes of its delusive melody.

With some difficulty I regained my starting point. Far from being discouraged by the want of success attending my first effort, I found myself more calm and collected than before. Reflection had strengthened my courage, by giving me

confidence in the success of the plan which I had adopted. The ruins could not possibly be very far distant, and I should certainly reach them in the morning, if I failed in doing so to-day. Animated by new hopes of success, I directed my steps towards the north, not forgetting, however, to take the proper precaution for ensuring my return, if necessary. The forest in this direction was on rising ground, thickly covered with dead leaves. I successively traversed several hills separated by narrow valleys, in which reigned the profoundest silence. The undergrowth soon commenced, and rapidly became more and more dense. I was only able to make my way with the greatest effort through the maze of branches and vines which obstructed my progress. My brow was wet with perspiration, my face and hands were covered with blood, but no obstacle could turn me from my course. A single thought absorbed my faculties, and my only fear was that of losing the thread which was to guide me. At last I succeeded in escaping from this almost impenetrable thicket, and saw before me a steep hill less thickly covered with vegetation. In ascending this I made a misstep and suffered a fall. At the moment I paid but little attention to this accident, but it subsequently appeared that a sharp point of rock had penetrated my right knee, reaching to the bone, and bruising it in such a manner as afterwards to occasion me the greatest pain and annoyance.

From the high point which I now succeeded in reaching, I could see nothing around me which wore a familiar look. Daylight was beginning to fade; there was nothing left for me to do but to retrace my steps, and make up my mind to remain at my station patiently until morning. My courage, however, was beginning to flag. The rapidly increasing darkness, the prospects of a night of anxiety, an intolerable thirst, the silence of these woods, the disappointment which had thus far attended my efforts—all these contributed to sadden and discourage me. After I had repassed the thickets which ob-

structed the valley, I found, to my consternation, that either from want of care or absence of mind, I was again lost! A deathlike shudder passed over me; the perspiration started from every pore, and my very breath seemed suspended. These painful sensations, however, did not at all resemble the feeling of stupor which overwhelmed me when, for the first time, I became conscious of my terrible situation. I still retained my presence of mind, and was able to deliberate on the course which I should pursue.

It was unsafe to stay in the thicket, on account of the reptiles and wild beasts which infested it, and I therefore ascended the hill which I had just left, but in another direction, when I discovered through the trees another eminence, which, by its isolated situation and conical shape, particularly arrested my attention. I advanced towards it, and found that the stones scattered around its foot seemed to bear the traces of human industry, although defaced by age. They had evidently formed part of some ancient structure which time had levelled to the ground. I will not attempt to describe the surprise, the joy and the gratitude which swelled my heart at this unexpected discovery. I fell upon my knees, and from the depths of my soul thanked God for lending me his protecting aid, at the very moment when I began to doubt his clemency! This done, I proceeded on my way.

Great caution was necessary. The tumulus before me was probably connected with other ruins, but nevertheless it was unfamiliar to my eyes. I resolved therefore to pursue the plan I had previously adopted, that is to say to explore the country around, but always adopting some point as a centre. I had advanced but a short distance, when new remains encouraged me to keep on in the same direction. I soon came to another small hillock, the top of which was covered with ruins. Their shape and style were becoming insensibly familiar to me, and without exactly taking in their details, which

the darkness was rapidly veiling, I instinctively felt that they were not strangers. It was thus, link by link, that I succeeded in reuniting the chain which I had so imprudently broken. By the time the last ray of daylight had faded, I reached the southern front of the Palace worn out with fatigue, bruised, and bleeding—but I had acquired valuable experience for the future. Morin, in his anxiety for me, had forgotten to prepare supper, and as a crowning misfortune, Fido, disgusted with so long a fast, devoured greedily the collection of birds and insects which had cost me so dear.

I have described this adventure in detail, in order to convey an impression of the dangers which a stranger incurs in traversing the forests of the new world. As to the wonderful bird, the immediate cause of my misfortune, I never heard its note again; I have even forgotten the tradition concerning it which was told me on the banks of the Usumasinta. On the following morning I made some amends for my ill success in hunting it, by killing a superb *hocco* (*crax alector*, L.) the first large specimen of the gallinæ which we had thus far seen. Birds of this species under the tropics, take the place of the turkey, which is a native of colder climes.

The ruins of Palenque, during the fine season, are resorted to as a place of enjoyment by the fashionables of Santo Domingo, who establish themselves there, with their families, to the great damage of the monuments, which bear many sad traces of their sojourn. They suspend their hammocks under the shade of the majestic trees, and swing in them indolently, listening to the murmur of the streams, and regaling themselves meanwhile with the shell-fish which are found here in great abundance. It is a species of *melanie*, in taste resembling our periwinkles. The Indians consider them very dainty morsels, and always lay in a store of them whenever an opportunity offers. I have often admiringly watched their dexterity in extracting the mollusc from his testaceous

covering. While walking along they strike two of them together with such precision and force, that in spite of the hardness of their shells the ends of both are broken, and their contents extracted and swallowed without a moment's loss of time. The shell of the *melanie* makes excellent lime, which is the only kind used in the vicinity. It is probable that it entered largely into the composition of the stucco used for the edifices of the ancient city.

It was with great regret that we left this spot; and I am almost ashamed to confess the vulgar consideration which induced us to hasten our departure. Our stock of rice and black beans, to which we had been reduced for two days, finally began to give out! There was no game to be had, and the forest yielded no fruit; our only resource against hunger was the shell-fish of the stream; famine therefore forced us to desert the ruins, and return to the village. The sun was already up when we descended the steps of the old Palace for the last time. Echo repeated the same sounds which had greeted us every morning on our awakening. The sonorous tap of the woodpecker was audible on the hollow trees; the humming bird buzzed along the cornices, while large blue butterflies flitted past the deserted peristyle. . . . I bade adieu to all these companions, who had served to enliven our solitary existence; gave one parting glance at the ruins and then plunged into the dark and almost pathless forest.

Santo Domingo possesses special interest for the naturalist. The neighboring woods are full of birds, and the tropical vegetation presents an extremely varied field for study. Among the curious trees and plants which I found here may be mentioned the *asta*, celebrated for its extreme hardness; the *cascarilla* (the *colpache* of the Indians), used in the country as a febrifuge; and the *storax* (*nabá*) the resin of which has a delightful odor. Instead of obtaining this substance in the usual manner, the Indians mutilate the tree which produces

it, by making great incisions, which cause the bark to fall off. The bark itself being aromatic, is used as incense in religious ceremonies. I found but few land shells in this vicinity, where, nevertheless, the *cylindrella* family is represented by the largest species known (the *cyl. decollata*, Nyst.) Diurnal and nocturnal butterflies abound. The natural soil is covered to so great a depth by vegetable deposits, which, in turn, support such a profusion of plants and small trees, that it is difficult to determine its character. Geologists, to make any discoveries here, must follow the course of the rivers. It was thus that at a league and a half to the southwest of the village, almost in the bed of the *Rio Chacamas*, I found a bed of oyster shells and petrified sea-urchins. The site is very picturesque. Imagine an Alpine torrent set in a frame of tropical vegetation. The noise of the waters dashing over the stones, the dazzlingly white foam contrasting with the dark, lustrous verdure of the two banks, the solitude, the warmth of the temperature, here all concur to please the eye and impress the imagination. A little above the falls, the river, confined between perpendicular calcareous rocks, is hardly four yards wide, but is of great depth. The Indians assert that when the sun is bright, the scales of a golden alligator may be seen shining at the bottom of the gulf; but we did not enjoy this spectacle.

Lower down the banks of the Chacamas, shaded by pimento trees, are elevated about twelve feet above the level of the water, and rest on a *breccia*, composed of shells, which forms a distinct deposit. Then comes a layer of large oyster shells, mingled with those of flattened sea-urchins, and a few other shells, for the most part those of bivalves. The sea urchins lie horizontally as they were deposited. These organic remains are held together by calcareous marl, and rest on a bed of vegetable earth, a yard in depth. They seem to belong to the Juraic era, and testify to the fact that water must have

covered the whole extent of Tabasco during that period. I found the same beds and the same fossils fifteen leagues to the southward of this place, at the foot of the same chain, in the village of Tenosique, the most southern town in the State.

I shall end this chapter with an anecdote, which has but little relation to my travels, yet seems to me worthy of preservation, at a time when our sceptical egotism readily consigns to the realms of fiction the heroism of past days. In the year 1834, a young Pole, exiled from his country, and a wanderer on the face of the earth, arrived at Santo Domingo. He possessed most amiable qualities, and seemed to be of gentle birth. The inhabitants, whose affections he soon won, in order to be sure of retaining him in their midst, wished him to marry. At first he refused to entertain such an idea, but after considerable entreaty, he consented to their proposition. His intended bride was a beautiful young girl, belonging to one of the best families in the neighborhood. Meantime, there arrived from Tabasco, by some fatal chance, an old newspaper, which, after passing from hand to hand, finally fell into those of the stranger, and advised him of the ill success attending the Polish revolution. What thoughts disturbed his soul, no one knows, for he kept his own counsel; but, during the night, he put an end to his existence. A few sad poetical lines were found by his bed side, in which, after thanking the people of the town for the interest they had manifested in him, he made a melancholy allusion to the subjection of his country, adding, that his heart being dead to all affection, and his life henceforth aimless, he could without crime return to the bosom of eternity.

Without endorsing an act condemned by religion and morality, it is, nevertheless, impossible to avoid bestowing upon its author a tribute of admiration. How deep must have been the love of country in that heroic breast, since neither time, nor distance, nor the sight of a new world could,

for a moment, smother the patriotic flame which burned there so steadily and so purely! The name of this unfortunate man was Alexander Lukinski. The inhabitants of Santo Domingo delight in speaking of him, and honor and revere his memory. It is most likely that his family has never learned his fate.

III.

THE WOODS OF CAMPEACHY.

Return to San Geronimo—The logwood tree—Dye-wood cuttings—The laborers—The *Mayoral*—Absence of roads—*Peonage*—Cattle raising—Aguadoras—Hacienda life—General improvidence—Natural history of the country—Remarkable frogs—Passport troubles—The Indians—Their alleged inferiority—Their ancient civilization—Humane policy of the Spanish crown towards them—Their condition under the new government—Retrogression—Indians of the *Tierras Calientes*—Their mode of life—Moral development—Superstitions—Education—Social condition—Local attachments—Food—Reserve before strangers—Improvidence and laws to prevent it—The *Mita*—The Indians of *Los Altos*, or Highlands—Their superior intelligence and industry—The future of the Indians of Central America—Doubtful prospects—Probable extinction of the Whites.

THE traveller from Santo Domingo who wishes to visit the district of Peten, can reach the Usumasinta by going directly towards the east. This route, intersected by numerous streams, naturally appeared to us to be the best and most agreeable, but we preferred, nevertheless, to retrace our steps, so as to investigate the great cuttings of dye-woods which we had passed by in reaching Palenque. This kind of industry, it should be observed, is confined to the plain and ceases among the mountains. The *hacienda de San Geronimo*, a property celebrated for its extent, fertility, and the inexhaustible resources of its forests, was happily situated for the object we had in view. I had received from the proprietors, while at Palizada, a pressing invitation to visit them, which I now determined to accept.

We again set out, therefore, on the route to Las Playas, and soon found ourselves on the muddy canal of the Rio Chiquito. We passed by, without stopping, the promontory where we had spent such a disagreeable night on our ascent,

reddish and transparent substance, analogous to gum Arabic, which, it is said, fixes the color in the dyes.

The forests of Tabasco and Yucatan, where the logwood-tree abounds, are interspersed with the lagoons, which during the season of the floods almost always communicate with navigable streams. The wood can therefore be cheaply transported from place to place; yet no words can convey an idea of the ignorance and carelessness with which this traffic is carried on. There is a total absence of efficient or economical management. The proprietor reposes a careless confidence in his woodcutters, who receive a real for each quintal of wood delivered at the point of embarcation. These men roam over the forest, selecting and cutting down such trees as please them, according to their caprice or convenience. An agent, called the *Mayoral*, oversees the work, and every evening verifies the result of the day's labor. On receiving the wood, he carefully rejects all that is marked with orange colored spots, which are indications of decay, and then has the remainder weighed in his presence and the amount set down to the credit of the laborer. The woodcutters are all under the jurisdiction of this *Mayoral*, who does not court popularity, but seeks only to inspire his subordinates with a wholesome fear. The workmen under him are almost always debtors to his principal, and laboring to liquidate their liabilities, they hardly ever set about their tasks with spirit. Inclined to be intemperate, and always disposed to put an end to their servitude by flight, it becomes necessary for the masters to keep a strict watch over them. The *Mayoral* frequently inflicts corporal chastisement, although the laws forbid and punish it, by acquitting the debtor of all further liabilities. But the laws only fall heavily on the weak, in these distant and isolated regions! The profits of the *Mayoral* are in proportion to the amount of wood delivered in the course of the year, and in this way his interests are united with those of his principals. At San

Geronimo, he receives three cents for every hundred weight of wood, equal, on a total of from two hundred and fifty to three hundred thousand quintals, to little less than eight thousand dollars a year.

The wood is cut down and barked with an axe. It has been vainly attempted to substitute the saw for this instrument, which would facilitate the work and perform it more evenly. But the aversion which the Indians feel to any innovation has prevented its adoption. The great inconvenience arising from their mode of operation is the irregular shapes which the wood takes under their hands, and which prevents its being stacked with ease. Furthermore, instead of cutting down the tree from its root, as ought to be done, they cut it a yard or more from the ground, where the trunk is thinner and more even, in order to save labor and to avoid the knots and protuberances which prevent it from being readily stripped of its bark. There is something quite sad in this practice of leaving a portion of the mutilated trunk still standing, the most important part of the tree, by the way, since it is well known that the stumps thus left never again send out vigorous shoots. It is high time that some intelligent proprietor should effect a reform in this respect. The revenue obtained from the cuttings might thus be doubled, and the business of wood-cutting, by careful management, might then be saved from the ruin which now menaces it.

The cutting of the wood commences with the dry season, when the water begins to fall, and navigation becomes interrupted. With the rise of the waters, transportation is resumed, and the accumulated stock is rapidly cleared off. In favorable localities, where navigation is continuous for the whole year, the cutting of the wood goes on steadily, without regard to the seasons. Few establishments, however, are thus advantageously situated. In most of them, the wood, after being cut, is dragged down to high water mark on the streams and lagoons,

where it awaits the periodical rise to be floated out to the *embarcaderos.* The traffic might be made constant in nearly all cases by the construction of roads, the removal of bars, or the deepening of channels, but the inhabitants of these countries prefer to wait on Providence to exerting themselves in enterprises of this kind. They have no means of transportation except such as nature affords them gratuitously. This fact should not be forgotten in judging of the merits of those numerous schemes of emigration which are constantly paraded before the public, and in which so much stress is laid on geniality of climate and productiveness of soil, without one word being said of the difficulties in the way of carrying them out, and which more than nullify the advantages which they are presumed to offer.

The best cuttings are situated in the swampy plains of Yucatan and Tabasco, and extend from the coast of the Gulf to the base of the mountains. Their products are sent by way of the island of Carmen and La Frontera to the point where the vessels from Europe come to receive them. The value of the wood, when put on board, varies from three to ten reals the *quintal.* At ten reals the vender realizes an immense profit, but it is a price rarely obtained. When a proprietor has not sufficient capital to cut the wood on his own account, he sells out his cuttings, reserving one third of the product, in kind. The conditions of this contract differ from those of a similar character with us. There is no land disposed of, only the right of establishing a certain number of wood cutters for a certain time on the property.

I have before referred to the system by which the proprietors obtain laborers, and which has become a serious abuse. It would be impossible to procure the wood without the aid of the Indians, and to obtain their services at a low price, they are seduced into contracting debts to their employer. He has then the legal right to compel their services, and they are ob-

liged to establish themselves near the works with their wives and children, where they are furnished with a miserable hut, and an axe is placed in their hands. They are now forced to obtain all their provisions from their masters, who charge the most exorbitant prices for the articles which they supply. The yield of this traffic is from one hundred and fifty to three hundred per cent. in favor of the vender, according to his rapacity or that of his agents. A poor woodcutter bound for a debt of fifty dollars, at the end of the first year finds it increased to one hundred, and by the time the second is concluded he has lost all hope of cancelling his obligations. No one in this land of iniquity has any scruples about accumulating a fortune by this means, that is to say, by robbing the unfortunate laborer of his liberty.

The grounds of San Geronimo were conceded by the crown of Spain, without any definition of limits, long before the founding of the town of Palizada, which on this account is somewhat restricted in its development. They are bounded on one side by the Usumasinta, and comprise nearly one hundred and seventy-five square leagues, including magnificent forests of logwood, brazil-wood, mahogany and other precious woods, besides streams and lagoons, and savannas favorable for cultivation and the raising of cattle. Pastoral industry always suited the taste of Spanish colonists;* and it is furthermore in harmony with the conditions of a country where property is measured by the square league. But cattle raising constitutes at San Geronimo a separate and distinct branch of administration and revenue. Every morning the herdsmen of the estate throw themselves into their saddles and ride all over the pastures to look out for the cows which have calves. They examine all the animals to see if they are suffering from *gusanos* (the *larvæ* of insects which

* *Crianza quita labranza!* The rearing of cattle relieves one from labor! This is the favorite and characteristic proverb of the country.

get beneath the skin and produce a disease that often ends fatally.) They look out, also, for the pigs, which run about the forest at will. They gallop after the runaway horses, and, in fact, make a daily report, from personal observation, of the state and condition of all the herds. Capable of enduring every kind of fatigue and privation, these hardy horsemen continually traverse the marshes, the pathless forests, and burning solitudes, without wearying of their laborious life, which has, for them, the crowning charm of independence.

I have rarely seen so dreary a landscape as that of San Geronimo. There is nothing in the aspect of the whole country to delight the eye or cheer the heart. Dark forests of logwood trees intersected by swamps exhaling deadly vapors, are all that meet the eye from one limit of the horizon to the other. They shadow over the lagoons and the stagnant ponds, where the dull waters are only agitated by the plunge of alligators, and where the indestructible skulls of these reptiles bleach like rocks on their shores. Yonder an uncultivated savanna spreads out monotonously through the immense woods. The soil is dark as gunpowder. A few marsh mallows, with woody stems, and some pale pink mimosæ, are the only productions that appeal to the eye pleasantly. The breeze of the evening, which is so impatiently longed for under the tropics, is here impregnated with fetid emanations, perhaps from the carcass of a decayed horse, or cow, which the worms have eaten alive, and around which now cluster a flock of vultures with brown plumage and bare necks, which tear their prey to pieces with their bills, fighting among each other for the entrails, and devouring them with avidity. These birds are very serviceable, however, as scavengers; for if they did not remove the dead animal substances, their decomposition would speedily increase the malignity of the climate. When the sinking sun casts its last coppery rays upon the swamps, the general appearance of the country produces a

sombre, sinister effect on the mind. But at this hour, fortunately, every object is inspired with new life. Groups of women with bronzed complexions and floating hair, half naked, but glittering with tinsel, throng the paths leading from the *hacienda*, to bathe in the still waters of the lagoons. They chant melancholy and drowsy songs, the melody of which is doubtless inspired by the gloom of everything around, though the words seem to belong to some more fortunate clime:

"A que el mundo
Es bonito!
Lastima es
Que yo me muera!"*

The absence of a final measure keeps the ear in suspense for what is to follow, but one hears only the repetition of the same verse. The traveller who has passed through Tabasco can never forget the plaintive melody of these accents, which are continually heard in every habitable spot.

The *hacienda* is situated, with its dependencies, on a spot but little elevated above the level of the waters. The dwellings are damp, unhealthy, and built in the most primitive style. The proprietor of this vast domain is scarcely better lodged than his slaves. For here man contents himself with the barest necessities of life, and one has only to travel here to find out how many of his wants are artificial, and the offspring of civilization; and here, in fact, he realizes that simple and primitive mode of life which filled the imaginations of the philosophers of a past age. I doubt if any other mode of life is simpler, perhaps none is better. A single example out of a thousand will convey an idea of that indifference which ren-

* "Oh, the world,
How full of beauty!
What a pity
I must die!"

ders the most precious gifts of nature superfluous. The soil of San Geronimo is exceedingly fertile. The cocoa tree produces fruit in its fourth year; the mango tree in its first; the almond of Malabar sends up its foliage to the height of fifty feet within two years after planting. To sow here is to reap: yet one looks in vain over the whole plantation for a single fruit tree or useful vegetable! The small quantity of potatoes, yams and banannas which are consumed are grown in Palizada. And, although the rivers and lagoons swarm with fish, those that are eaten are imported. In the midst of herds of cattle, the inhabitants dine on beef salted in the United States, and they drink the nauseous waters of the swamps, when a well ten feet deep would furnish them with a fresh and wholesome supply! Their lives are passed in the utter ignorance of everything like comfort. If the Indians of these countries have so far degenerated as to make us doubt whether they were ever in a better condition, the same doubt will apply to the Creole Spaniards, the descendants of the conquerors of the men who founded Campeachy and Merida, and who added to the riches of America the useful plants of the old world! There still exist here names famous in history, which recall the great event of the past. At San Geronimo there is one Balboa, a simple herdsman of the hacienda, who, although cognizant of his illustrious origin, limits his ambition, in a country made celebrated by his ancestors, to vagrant roamings through the woods in pursuit of wild horses, and to the tending of cattle!

Natural history, in those low, swampy, thickly-wooded regions, has but little variety. The lagoons contain *ampulaires*, enormous *anodontes*, and many *unios*, only one species of which is really curious (the *U. delphinulus*, Morlt.)

Many kinds of turtles, belonging to the *emys*, *cinosternon*, and *staurotypus* families, are also to be found here. But they are less remarkable, and there are fewer species than on the shores opposite Louisiana and the Floridas. I heard of boas

of immense size, but saw none. I fancy that these reptiles rarely, if ever, attain any very great dimensions in Central America. Birds did not appear to me to be very numerous. The same remark applies to insects, although the houses are haunted by enormous roaches and hideous spiders, which are continually crawling over the walls. I here found an interesting and extraordinary variety of frog, which only a few years since was for the first time classified by naturalists.* The description then given of it, after a specimen preserved in alcohol, was necessarily incomplete. I shall profit by this occasion to attempt to convey a better idea of its appearance and characteristics. It is of an olive brown color, very dark on the back, with a light streak along the dorsal line. Its tail and thighs are of a bluish hue. It is covered with faint spots of bluish green, while there are others, more distinct, of light vermillion in an almost continuous straight row up the middle of the back. All the under side of the body is of a somewhat dull *lapis-lazuli* blue. This frog is remarkable by its small conically-shaped head, which can hardly be distinguished from the globular mass of its body, and is surmounted by two projecting little eyes, and by the scarcely visible orifice which serves it as a mouth, as also by the shortness of its legs, and lastly, by the bluish tint of its abdomen. It is rarely to be seen during the daytime, and lives in holes which it digs in some damp spot. When it is about to commence this operation it swells itself up like a balloon, then resting on its fore feet, it labors assiduously with its hind ones, which it spreads out like a pallet. It dilates itself in the same manner when caught, in its struggles to escape. On seeing the diminutive body of this animal, and the slight muscular resistance with which it seems to be endowed, one would never suspect the strength of which it gives proof on some occasions. I succeeded, with great difficulty, in capturing two. I enclosed

* *R. dorsalis* Dum. et Bib. *Erpét. gén.*, t. viii. p. 757.

them in a glass jar, through which they endeavored for an entire day to dig a hole, without apparently feeling at all discouraged by the ill success of their efforts.

My sojourn at San Geronimo was prolonged by an annoyance which my readers might suppose, from its triviality, was borrowed from my recollections of our own hemisphere. My passport had miscarried *en route* from Las Playas to Santo Domingo, and I found myself unable to procure another at this last-named town. The *alcalde* referred me to the sub-prefect, and the sub-prefect sent me back to the *alcalde*. Each of these dignitaries overwhelmed me with professions, but both declined to be responsible for my good behaviour. At last the sub-prefect, whom this matter more directly concerned as the head of the prefecture, evaded the difficulty by disappearing one fine day from the place. Such is the authority which the magnates of the government enjoy in the republic of Chiapa! They are permitted to assume no responsibilities. All orders proceed from a small despotic centre, which regulates the most trivial details of government; outside of this are only to be found mere passive instruments, who tremble perpetually in view of the instability of their position.

I finally decided to send Morin to Palizada to arrange the matter, remembering the adventure of Captain Dupaix, who, on his return to Tabasco, was arrested, searched, and imprisoned for some informality, in the name of the government which he served.* Morin accomplished, on horseback, in eight hours, our weary journey of two days and a half in a boat, and found the authorities of Yucatan better acquainted with their functions than those in the State of Chiapa. We secured our passports.

Before proceeding further, and at the risk of unduly in-

* See the account of the misfortunes of Dupaix in the third volume of his Memoirs, p. 36 of the *Recueil des Antiquités Mexicaines.*

terrupting my narrative, I must say a few words about the aboriginal races which constitute by far the larger proportion of the population throughout the whole country covered by my travels.

Everywhere the opinion seems to be general, that the intellectual faculties of the Indians of our days, whose ancestors raised the monuments of Palenque, Uxmal, and Chichén-Itza, are inferior to those of the negro. But who would recognize in the *fellahs* of modern Egypt the descendants of that people who have transmitted to our days many of the leading elements of our civilization, and have left the pyramids as the imperishable witnesses of their power? Or in the barbarous and crafty Moors of Morocco, the offspring of the brilliant Arabs who introduced chivalry into Europe? But it is the actual condition of the Indians of Central America which claims our present attention, not so much what they have been or may become.

We cannot attribute to the interested views of the conquerors of America the opinion now so generally diffused as to the incapacity of the aborigines. How then, after the tribute of admiration which they spontaneously paid to the civilization of Mexico, Yucatan, and Peru, are we to explain the sentence which was afterwards pronounced against the same populations who had furnished so many indubitable proofs of their capacities, and which has condemned them as born to servitude and beneath the rank of humanity? Only by supposing that by such a sentence oppression became easier, if not altogether justified. The policy initiated on the basis of this assumption, has done more to annihilate the American race than the violence of conquest or the blind zeal of bigotry, under the name of religion.

It is but just to the Spanish government to say that it omitted no effort to limit the excesses of its officers and people in America as against the Indians. The Special Code and the

Ordinances sent out from the Council of the Indies, and the reiterated decrees and instructions of the crown, attest a high solicitude in behalf of the natives, in strong contrast with the ill will of the colonists towards them; but, unfortunately, the spirit which dictated these laws did not preside over their execution. They, furthermore, unintentionally perhaps, but effectually, favored the spread and perpetuation of the popular prejudices as to the real inferiority of the Indians, by speaking of them and providing for them as minors in all civil matters, and while exempting them from military service, subjecting them to forced labor, to tribute and humiliating punishments, thus contributing to form gradually in the State a class without a name, without a future, and comparable only with the helots of Sparta in respect of position. Colonial legislation was not slow in widening these distinctions, which it did most effectually by prohibiting legitimate alliance between the whites and Indians. The latter have never recovered from the abasement into which this policy gradually reduced them, and which finished by effectually enervating the virility of character which they possessed at the time of the Conquest. Habituated for so long a period to contempt and pity, they have come to regard themselves as inferior beings, and their self-respect can never be restored, except through a series of efforts as prolonged as those which have humbled them have been continuous and implacable.

It was after the independence of the colonies that the sad effects of the policy which I have indicated first became apparent; and hasty efforts were then made to remedy them, but the evil was too deeply seated. The State wanted citizens, but it found only slaves. With a race endowed with an organization moderately flexible, and with a rare perseverance in its habits and customs, it is easier to efface impressions than to substitute ideas, and the Indians at once rebelled against the efforts that were made to communicate them. In Guatemala, for ex-

ample, the leading minds of the State conceived that the abolition of corporal punishment, so degrading to the spirit of man, would go far towards elevating the Indian character; yet, strange to say, as soon as the Indians themselves had succeeded in placing one of their own representatives in the post of chief executive, their first demand was for the restoration of the bastinado.

With the independence, and in conformity with its principles and spirit, the Indians became at once elevated to the same civil rank as their former masters, possessing the same rights and entitled to the same privileges. But they were not prepared for the change, neither by the instruction nor the example of their fathers, and so far from contributing to the advancement of the new order of things, brought upon it the gravest prejudices. Incapable of comprehending or appreciating their new situation, they were only sensible that they were free from previous restrictions, and no longer subject to tribute; but not a single generous sentiment was excited in consequence, nor was there developed in any degree that spirit of emulation, ambition and progress which the leaders of the revolution had fondly anticipated. On the contrary, they abandoned themselves to idleness, drunkenness and general disregard of their most obvious obligations towards each other and the State, and when afterwards called upon to discharge them, they openly resisted the demand, or fled to the mountains, where they gave themselves up to a life essentially savage. In this way many villages soon disappeared, which, during the colonial administration, were both populous and flourishing. Under this state of things culture diminished, the roads which had been opened by the anterior government were allowed to fall into ruin, the public schools ceased to be frequented, and civil war, with all its train of evils, followed fast on the prostration of material interests and the demoralization of the public sentiment. The new governments were found inefficient

to meet these unhappy conditions, and equally powerless to restore the old or establish a new system.

This description applies particularly to the Indians who occupy the *tierras calientes*, or hot regions of Central America. Here each man cuts the timber for his own house, carries it on his own back to the spot where he wants it, puts it together with withes, and thatches it with straw with his own hands. He cultivates just enough ground to furnish his individual supplies, or gathers them from among the natural products of the forest. His scanty furniture is equally the work of his own hands, as is also the still scantier clothing which he wears. When sick, he makes use of the few vegetable simples of which his father taught him the virtues, and which he collects in the wilderness. Time with him has no value, and without hope or care for the future, his ideal of happiness is in present repose. His absolute material wants are his sole incentives to action. His vague ideas of fatalism furnish him equally with an excuse for his indolence and a basis of contentment under all the circumstances of his condition. He supports stoically the maladies which may afflict him, and the evil fortunes that may befall him. Death almost always finds him prepared. "My hour is come!" or "I go to my rest, my work is done!" are the only observations which he makes on its approach.

And here I may observe that what is called the conversion of the Indians, in these as in earlier days, is more apparent than real, and consists in little more than an abandonment of their idolatry. It is true that most of them do not object to baptism, and are willing to go through the forms of religion when the church is near by; but these exterior observances, although they seem to satisfy the missionaries, have no real value, and have no connection with the truths of revelation, or the spirit and practise of pure morals. How absurd to look for a harvest when the ground has not been prepared for the reception of the seed!

The Indian mother fills the mind of her infant with a thousand puerile superstitions, which no subsequent experience or observation can eradicate. It is a mysterious being, clothed in red, which sighs and wails in the forest to mislead the traveller; the ruined edifices which rise crumbling and spectral in remote valleys are the haunts of invisible spirits; and the fawn-colored animals which cross his path are the forms assumed by evil and powerful enchanters. He believes that certain men of his own race possess invisible poisons, through means of which they can afflict their enemies with blindness or strike them with death. You ask him concerning a Supreme Being, or question him on the immortality of the soul, or his hopes of a future life, but he will answer you nothing. A long religious tyranny, over a weak but obstinate race, has taught it to practise a profound dissimulation in all things relating to its beliefs.

The physical education of the Indian commences early. When ten or twelve years of age a *machete* is put in his hands, and a load proportioned to his years on his shoulders, and he is made to accompany his father in his excursions or his labors. He is taught to find his way in the most obscure forests, through means of the faintest indications. His ear is practised in quickly detecting the approach of wild animals, and his eye in discovering the venomous reptiles that may lie in his path. He is taught to distinguish the vines, the juices of which have the power of stupefying fishes so that they may be caught by hand, as also those which are useful for their flexibility, or for furnishing water to the wayfarer. He soon comes to recognize the *leche Maria*, the precious balm with which he can heal his wounds; and the *guaco* which neutralizes the venom of serpents. He finds out the shady dells where the cacao flourishes, and the sunny eminences where the bees go to deposit their honey in the hollow trunks of decaying trees. He learns, or is taught, all these things early, and then his education is complete. When he reaches the age of sixteen or

seventeen years, he clears a little spot of ground in the forest with the aid of fire and his machete. He plants it with maize, builds a little hut in the corner, and then brings to it a companion, most likely one who was affianced to him in his earliest infancy. Without doubt, he has some regard to the age and attractions of his female companion, but his marriage, if the union may be so called, is based on none of those tender sentiments and mutual appreciations, which with us lie at the foundation of the social superstructure.

But it must be said to the credit of the Indian that he loves his home. His hut is his asylum, where he enjoys an authority and isolation which compensate for the contempt or assumption of superiority of the whites. There no one interferes with his tastes or habits of life; the submission and devotion of his companion is absolute, and his children never dispute his authority or contravene his wishes. Within his small circle his mode of life is essentially patriarchal. His government, when he had one of his own, was the same.

The general sobriety of the Indians has been compared by the Spaniards themselves to a rigid and perpetual fast; but it must be admitted that it is only a negative virtue, the offspring of necessity, and ready to succumb on the first opportunity. Their food is simple in the extreme. Beans grossly cooked, *tortillas*, a few banannas, raw peppers for seasoning, beef cut in slices and dried in the sun, a little pork, and a few eggs on grand occasions, and a cup of chocolate at long intervals, with such fruits and roots as nature herself offers, constitute about the entire range of their alimentary resources.

The sensibilities of the Indians are dulled from total want of excitement. Their griefs are as few as their enjoyments, and neither affect them keenly. The drowsiness of their intelligence brings with it one benefit—they are not afflicted with *ennui*. Immovably and in silence they support the weight of time with the utmost complacency; but when thrown in com-

pany with others of their own race and apart from strangers, they become singularly animated and loquacious. Considering the limited circle of their ideas, it is difficult to guess the subjects of their protracted dialogues. The flow of words and immoderate laughter which, among my Indian guides, frequently extended over a great part of the night, was to me a constant puzzle. I often listened attentively to ascertain to what the conversation related, and what it was that amused them, in the hope of detecting the excitable elements of their nature, but without success. Their conversation was always carried on in the aboriginal dialects, and at a considerable distance from the stranger.

The government of Yucatan has been unable to find a better expedient, to guard against the idleness and improvidence of the Indians, than one which contravenes the fundamental law of the State. It obliges every head of a family to plant and cultivate sixty *metkates*, equal to about a fourth of an acre, of maize every year. The alcaldes of the different *partidos* enforce this regulation, and report to the government. Those who do not comply with it are condemned to work for certain periods on the public roads, until the estimated value of their labor equals that of an average crop from the lands which they failed to cultivate. But there is another and less violent mode established by law to compel the Indians to labor. This is a perpetuation of an ancient colonial law, the *mita*. Every man of color, Indian or Negro, who gets in debt is obliged to acquit his obligation by his service at fixed rates, and until this is effected he is the *de facto* slave of his creditor. The latter may compel his labor at such places as he may indicate, or he may sell him for the time being to whoever will pay the debt in whole or in part. The only privilege which the law accords to the debtor is this, that he may appeal to the authorities for a change of masters when it can be shown that his present one is cruel, or does not properly

provide for his necessities. In this case his earnings, or the price which may be paid for him, goes towards the liquidation of the original debt. The result of this system is, that generally the Indian devolves all care for the future on his master, draws his support and clothing from him on a credit, and, increasing rather than diminishing his debt, ends by becoming, with his family after him, on whom his responsibility falls, a slave for life. Of course proprietors seek to continue rather than terminate this order of things, which gives them all the benefits of slavery without its odium, and free from many of its responsibilities. It is but just to say that their rule is generally mild and paternal, and attended with but few of the abuses which we find in countries where slavery exists by virtue of direct legislation.

In certain localities, as at Palizada, and in the wood-cutting districts generally, this system exists in its most aggravated form. Four-fifths of the native population are overwhelmingly compromised to the leading proprietors, who exact their labors with the greatest severity ; and as these proprietors possess here all that there is of influence and authority, the condition of the poor Indian is truly pitiable.

What I have said, as already intimated, applies chiefly to the Indians of the *tierras calientes*, or hot regions of the country. On the high and cooler plateaus of the interior, or what are called *Los Altos*, we find the aboriginal race under different conditions, and of a different character. There, beneath milder skies, and under the influence of a climate more favorable for the development and exercise of the physical faculties, we find the descendants of the ancient Quichés, Zutugils and Kachiquels—men of an active and courageous race, whose heads never grow grey, and whose labors are directed beyond supplying the wants of the hour, and towards their future well-being. Vast cultivated areas, in place of unbroken forests, notwithstanding the soil is less fertile, attest here the

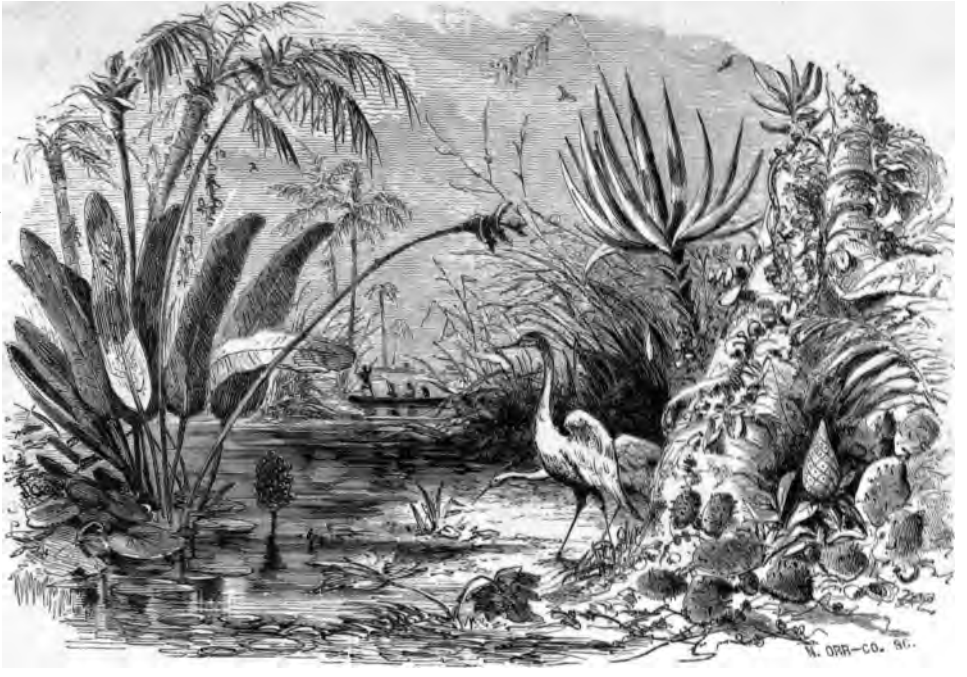
existence of persevering industry. Here the intervention of the government is not necessary to stimulate production. Mechanics are to be found of almost every kind, frequently of great skill and taste—carpenters, masons, weavers, and workers in iron and the precious metals. Generally very well dressed, neat in person, with firm step and independent bearing, they constitute a class of citizens in the State who only require to be better educated to rise equal to the best. So far from relapsing under the new system of government which has taken the place of the colonial administration, they have advanced steadily under it, with a fair comprehension of its liberties and an appreciation of its benefits.

It is, nevertheless, difficult to say what will be the future of the Indians of Central America, considered as a whole—whether by general and careful instruction and wise legislation they may be gradually elevated, socially and politically, so as to become competent citizens of a well-organized State, or whether the distrust which they entertain of the Spaniards and the deep and implacable hate which they cherish toward them, will result in a general uprising, and their ultimate complete ascendancy, with a restoration of savage independence, having all the bad and but few of the good features of that which prevailed before the Conquest? At present the whites dominate, in virtue of the *prestige* of the Conquest and through their superior resources and intelligence. But, on the other hand, the Indians vastly exceed them in numbers; their superiority in this respect is rapidly and constantly increasing; and they are no longer to be frightened by horses, or put to flight by the discharge of an arquebus!

Doubts may well be entertained of the ability of existing governments to sustain their power by force. Apart from the great superiority of numbers which may be arrayed against them, the broken character of the country, without roads, bridges, or other facilities for the effective movement of regu-

lar forces, is an element which must tell against them greatly, but still more in favor of the Indians. Clearly, they will be unable to sustain themselves, except at a few points, and even then but for short periods, in case of an uprising of the natives. The pregnant question is, have they the wisdom to devise a course of instruction and training adequate to convert the Indian into an industrious citizen, capable of comprehending his duties towards the State, and of exercising them intelligently? And have they the constancy and patience to carry out such a system faithfully and firmly through the long series of years requisite to its development and success? We are compelled to doubt. What then is to be the future of Central America, but more especially of those parts where the Indian element is most conspicuous, in Guatemala and Yucatan? The question seems to admit of but one answer, which the hardiest speculator may well dread to pronounce!*

* It has been practically answered, in part, by the bloody outbreak of the Indians in Yucatan, and by the success of Carrera and his savage hordes in Guatemala. In Yucatan the struggle still continues, with a steady advance of the Indian power, and a corresponding decline of the Spaniards in numbers and authority. In Guatemala a like catastrophe has only been postponed by a propitiation of the Indian leader, who, like a tiger gorged, pauses for awhile in his desolating career. The influences which surround him may be sufficient to restrain him during his life, but with his death or deposition the war of castes, which he commenced, can scarcely fail to break out again with renewed violence. The embers of discontent among the native population are still red and glowing beneath their ashy covering.—T.



THE LAGOONS OF CAMPEACHY.

IV.

THE USUMASINTA RIVER.

Diurnal storms—Ford of San Geronimo—Alligators—Deer—The coyol palm—Savannas—Unbroken solitudes—Balancan—The snake's bane, or *platanillo*—Tumuli—Improvidence of the people—Pearl fishing in fresh water—Rio San Pedro—Night on the river—Storm—Inflammatory tendencies of the system under the tropics—La Cabecera—An European recluse—Tenosique—Excessive heat—Rapids of the Usumasinta—Boca del Cerro—Unconquered Indians—The great river—Sickness—Departure for Peten—Reflections on the country and its inhabitants.

THE last three days which we passed at San Geronimo were marked by extraordinary atmospheric phenomena. Each day, soon after noon, the sky became overcast with thick clouds, which drooped in heavy volumes almost to the earth, causing a profound gloom like that of night, and oppressing all animated nature with a vague terror. These premonitions were always followed by violent winds, accompanied by heavy rain and the most fearful thunder and lightning that I ever witnessed, which continued throughout the remainder of the day and most of the night. In the morning, however, all became calm again, and nature resumed her serenity under a clear and smiling sky. Only the saturated earth, strewn with branches of trees twisted from their parent stems, bore witness of the convulsions of the preceding day. These perturbations of the atmosphere appeared to announce a change of season. My hosts vainly endeavored to reassure me on this point by opposing their experience to my apprehensions. I feared that the rain, in the low, swampy region which I was about to visit, might seriously interfere with my progress. Besides, I must admit, I was glad of a pretext to leave the dismal locality of

San Geronimo. Resisting, therefore, all persuasion to remain longer, I determined to continue my travels. We were furnished with horses and a guide, besides having a *cayuco* placed at our disposal, to transport our effects to the village of *Balancan*, from whence we proposed slowly to continue on our journey. We were also furnished with letters of introduction to parties in the various localities where we proposed to stop. This hospitable practice, I am happy to say, is religiously observed in the more distant parts of Spanish America; but I have remarked that in the more frequented localities it has not stood the test of civilization any better than in the old world.

We lost much valuable time on the morning we set out, in searching for our dog, Fida, which the men on the farm had lured away, and which we found great difficulty in compelling them to give up. This delay obliged us, for fear of the storm, to limit the first stage of our journey to *Chablay*, a large hacienda three leagues to the southward. We first crossed the muddy stream of San Geronimo, the banks of which are high and abrupt. The ford was full of alligators, sleeping with their mouths open, as if waiting to receive their prey. We counted seven of them here, all from ten to twelve feet in length. These reptiles, awakened from sleep by our approach, seemed a little disturbed, but soon disappeared under the water. The fording of the river itself was easy enough, but the rain had rendered the ground by which it is approached a dangerous quagmire. Morin placed Fida beside him on his own saddle, lest she should be swallowed by the alligators, while we waited for our guide to reach the other side of the stream, in order to direct our movements by his. He passed over with the air of a man acquainted with the locality, and we followed, supporting ourselves in our stirrups. I have heard that in certain countries alligators are possessed of such amiability as to tolerate man's familiarity, and even to frolic with him. This does not, however, apply to those of Tabasco,

where the reptiles do not hesitate, whenever the opportunity offers, to snap up a straggler without scruple. The *hacienda* of San Geronimo has itself furnished several victims to their greedy maws. Only recently, an Indian crossing the ford on a spirited young horse, had fallen into the stream, and become the prey of these monsters. Two days after the event, his body, fearfully mangled, was found buried in the mud; for the alligator, like the dog and fox, inters his prey to prevent too rapid decomposition.

Beyond the ford we saw, for the first time, some deer, in size and general appearance resembling those of our own country. They seemed disposed to be social; and in an isolated hut by the roadside we were shown a tame doe which roamed through the woods at will, but which never failed to return to her home at night. This animal had just given birth to two young ones; they were of a reddish color, with white spots running down the middle of the back, in two longitudinal rows.

The plain as far as Balancan, a village distant eleven leagues, is undulating and intersected with lagoons, which, at this season of the year, are encircled by a rim of black mud, a quarter of a league broad. Among the different varieties of palm trees with which the woods are ornamented, none produces a better effect than the *cocoyol* (*cocos butyracea* L.) before its stipe is quite developed, and when its leaves, five or six yards in length, droop like plumes to the ground. The nuts of this palm yield a substance resembling butter, which is largely used for domestic purposes in many parts of America. I recognized the medicinal cassia tree by its enormous cylindrical pods, and the calabash tree, which heretofore I had only seen in the vicinity of settlements. The savannas contain many palm trees, either growing alone or in groups, which have resisted the fires lighted here each year by the herdsmen. These savannas can only be traversed with great

difficulty, since the water cuts up their entire surface with deep gullies, which intersect each other like the lines on a chess-board. In these solitudes may occasionally be seen a stray herd belonging to some *hacienda*, and now and then a *rancho* meets the eye—that is to say, a straggling hut occupied by vaqueros or by wood-cutters. At long intervals the traveller encounters a wood-cutting establishment, or the seat of logwood commerce. The dwelling of the proprietor is always built on the highest point, and his dependents surround him according to the plan which he may trace out. From the mouth of the Usumasinta to Balancan, on a tortuous line of nearly sixty leagues, there exist but two villages, namely, Palizada, recently built, and *Monte Cristo*, which hardly numbers a dozen families. One cannot but feel regret in ascending this beautiful stream, through the most fertile plains in the world, that commerce, activity and life do not add their charms to its banks. At rare intervals a canoe with a cargo of salt or dye-wood drifts lazily along, and the traveller may afterwards expect to sail many an hour along the silent banks, and leave behind him leagues of fertile but untilled ground, before encountering another human being, a hut, or a cultivated field to cheer his vision.*

Balancan is a village of about forty-five families, pleasantly situated on the steep banks of the Usumasinta, the bed of which is here sand and gravel. Here, too, the ground begins to rise, and escapes the miasma of the plain. The Span-

* The Spaniards see things from a different point of view. "In Tabasco," says a national writer, "the banks of the streams are embellished with simple little houses, thatched with palm leaves and surrounded by fruit trees and evergreen pastures. Happiness dwells in these cottages, in which reside in peace and innocence one or two hard-working families," etc.—(*Appendice à la Historia de Cogolludo*, por Don Manuel Zavela.) No one could expect to find in these countries a just subject for eulogy. It is well to love one's native land and properly to sound its praises, but this should not be done at the expense of truth and good sense.

iards who are settled in this village maintain their superiority over the Indians, and manage to live in a more generous manner, by trading in trifles which they purchase at Palizada. The profits which are gained on the lower waters of the stream continually occupy their thoughts, and their dream by night and day is to obtain similar advantages without risk or labor. As to the Indians, who dread mental even more than bodily fatigue, they take no part or interest in these projects. The logwood grows in the neighboring forests, together with the *moral*, known in commerce under the name of brazil-wood. The establishment of a machine for the sawing of these woods had once been talked of, but one of the revolutions which desolate this province prevented the enterprise from being carried out.

We were lodged in the *cabildo*, a dilapidated structure, of two rooms, one of which was used for a school. The mud which filled up the interstices in the walls of the apartment which we occupied had fallen out in many places, permitting us to enjoy from our hammocks a view of the neighboring country, where the wild vegetation disputed the ground, inch by inch, with the laborer. On no portion of the banks of the Usumasinta have I ever seen the land cultivated with a view to a surplus. Each person plants just sufficient for his own consumption or for that of the workmen whom he employs. On many plantations, like that of San Geronimo, the proprietor prefers to purchase grain rather than spare any of his workmen from the cuttings. This system is fatal to the development of the country.

The name of Balancan, like most of those belonging to primitive geography, is borrowed from the most salient objects of the locality. Thus *balan*, or *ballam*, in the *Maya* language, means jaguar, and *can* serpent. The partial clearing of the forest has driven the jaguar into more dense solitudes, but the reptiles have not been so easily dislodged. My host, in explaining to me the etymology of Balancan offered one

day, by way of illustration, to show me in the course of half an hour any species of serpent which I might name. I accepted his banter, and named a rattlesnake. One of the servants, by his order, started out with a string and bamboo staff. Twenty minutes had scarcely elapsed before the man brought back a living female specimen, which he had fastened to his stick. As so favorable an opportunity offered itself, I was naturally desirous of testing the virtue of the *platanillo*, the praises of which I had so often heard sounded. I have already mentioned that this plant is supposed by the natives to have such virtue as to be able, by the simple touch, to deprive venomous reptiles of their fangs. On my expressing a desire to see this operation performed, an old Indian, renowned for his skill, was sent for. Curiosity drew many around us, but no one doubted the success of the experiment. When the ligaments which confined the neck of the serpent had been loosened, he opened his frightful jaws and furiously bit at the plant when presented to him, but his teeth continued firmly fixed in his head. After many fruitless attempts to deprive him of his fangs, in which the operator manifested much adroitness, they at last came out, leaving the reptile effectually disarmed. The mystery was now clear to me. The fangs being slight and having weak roots, it is by no means wonderful that when once fastened in the rigid, tenacious fibres of the plant, they can easily be broken off. The spectators did not like this explanation, and in spite of the evidence they had just received, continued to retain perfect faith in the marvellous virtues of the *platanillo*.

During the same day I saw in the woods a *nahuyaca* of great size. It crossed a glade where I was sauntering; provided with nothing with which to defend myself except an umbrella. Absorbed by the beauties of the country by which I was surrounded, I came near treading on the reptile. Fortunately I happened to look down at the moment, and had time

to draw back. The serpent continued on its way, quickening its motions somewhat, yet manifesting but little uneasiness. When it had disappeared in the undergrowth, I measured the impression which it had left on the ground, and found it to be seven feet in length. This species of snake terrifies the Creoles beyond measure, and they eulogize the rattlesnake at its expense. "*La vivora de cascabel*," they say, "is generous; it gives the alarm before it strikes; but the *nahuyaca* is pitiless." As for myself, I find little to choose between them, for the venom of both appears to be equally fatal. In their anger they rarely content themselves with a single bite; on the contrary, their attacks are made with incredible rapidity, and as their fangs are so slender, the wounds they produce are often imperceptible. It is said that by rubbing the skin with lemon juice, the bites become reddened, and thus their exact locality can be ascertained.

There exist in the environs of Balancan numbers of tumuli and other remains evidently aboriginal. Excavations made at the base of these mounds have brought to light many objects analogous to those discovered in Yucatan, consisting of grotesque idols, various kinds of pottery, pieces of obsidian, concave stones with their cylindrical rollers for crushing maize, etc. These latter utensils are identical with those used at the present time, but they are of a very fine green-veined granite, obtained from some site now unknown.

It was with considerable difficulty that we found boatmen to enable us to pursue our journey; not that hands were wanting in this place, but they considered that the gain was not commensurate with the labor and trouble. In these countries, so different from our own, I have never seen any one comfortably living on a fixed income; all here is casual, precarious and uncertain. Sometimes a large fortune is acquired by some lucky speculation in dye-woods, but it is soon foolishly expended. A hundred dollars with us is never to be despised,

but it has little value in the eyes of people who live on beans and maize, in a hut of canes, and who go bare-footed all the year round.

Our host finally succeeded in procuring us a number of oarsmen, and we prepared to sail up the stream to the village of Usumasinta, distant twelve leagues, and better known under the name of *Cabecera*, which it took a few years ago, when it was for a time elevated to the dignity of the chief town of this political district. From Balancan we made but slow progress. We had to struggle against a powerful current, which increases towards the mountains. The bed of the river is always of considerable depth; the banks of very fine blue clay at their base, surmounted by various layers of sand and gravel. These last named form a concrete mass, and solidify to such a degree as to form a tolerably hard and abrupt ledge. On the sand banks which the waters had left bare, we observed a large number of fresh-water muscles, which we learned had been accumulated by the women of the country, who, during the dry season, search among them for pearls.* We were assured that many of great value were thus found. Morin, at this piece of intelligence, thought himself on the road to fortune, but all his efforts at pearl-finding were in vain. Hundreds of shells are frequently cast aside before one is found containing the precious concretion, the precise origin of which still continues a mystery.

At four leagues from Balancan, we passed on our left the mouth of the Rio de San Pedro, one of the principal tributaries of the Usumasinta, which takes its rise in the centre of the dis-

* *Unios explicatus*, Morlt. Pearls, it is well known, are found in several varieties of fresh-water muscles. The excitement consequent on their discovery in the streams of New Jersey, a few years ago, is too recent to have been forgotten. The mound-builders of the Mississippi valley seem to have obtained great numbers from the *unios* of the western rivers; several hundreds of them have been found in a single mound, including some of extraordinary size.—T.

trict of Peten, and falls by a succession of rapids through the wildest and most picturesque country in the world into the Usumasinta. The waters of this river are endowed to a high degree with petrifying virtues. The obstructions in its course, particularly those in the vicinity of Nojmactun, have all originated in the incrustation and solidification of the trunks of trees which have fallen into the stream. Only a few adventurers have ascended its unfrequented channel, searching in the distant forests for those colossi of the vegetable kingdom, of which the great *cayucos* are made. An opportunity was at one time afforded me of exploring it myself; but ill health prevented this attempt.

Near the point where the San Pedro flows into the Usumasinta is a low island, called Santa Anna. Here we wasted much time in searching for provisions, and were detained until it became quite dark. The shores, covered with thick forests, offered us no refuge for the night, and we were obliged to proceed on our ascent, notwithstanding the darkness, frequently striking against the obstacles in the stream, and by no means comforted by the reverberations of distant thunder and the deep roar of the rapids of the river, which we were gradually approaching. At last we perceived a bank, on which we determined to land, drawing our canoe up after us on the sand. All was sad and silent. It was not the usual calm of night, but the quiet which always precedes a storm. Lightning darted all over the sky, and at intervals we perceived the red light of a forest burning near Balancan. The rain soon fell in immense drops, driving us to seek refuge under an adjacent tree. In a few moments the wind commenced blowing violently from the south-east with such force that the forests bent to the ground before it, while the sand on the shore was caught up in blinding whirls in the air. The storm was too violent to last long, and it finally swept off towards the north as suddenly as it had arisen. When we left our shelter, we found.

much to our delight, that the mosquitoes as well as the clouds had drifted off before the hurricane.

We resumed our journey, and without any remarkable incident, at the end of three days reached the village of *La Cabecera.* I was much fatigued by this uncomfortable mode of travelling, in a boat only a foot and a half wide, and in which every position was painful, to say nothing of the annoyances of mosquitoes and other insects, and the overwhelming heat, which seemed to pervade earth, sky, and water. The hamlets scattered along the road, *Santa Anna, Multa, Estapilla*, all together, had been able to furnish us with only half a dozen eggs and a bunch of banannas! I was charmed with the idea of beginning a new mode of life, and hoped to regain my strength in this more salubrious part of the country. I supposed that I had now reached a point where the temperature was lower, which was what I most ardently desired. My satisfaction, however, was short-lived, for on arriving at Cabecera, I felt the premonitory symptoms of fever; in addition to which the bruise, occasioned by my fall in the forest of Palenque, had become much inflamed, and was daily becoming more painful. Morin also suffered from ulcers on his legs, which would not yield to medicine. Travellers under the tropics are very liable to this affliction. Red pimples, or small tumors, first make their appearance, particularly on the limbs, and increase in size gradually, until they become full of matter, when they break, and discharge, frequently, leaving festering sores, which spread over the integuments, and end in ulcerations which are very unyielding and constantly reproducing themselves. Diet, repose, cooling beverages, and topical emollients form the best treatment in these cases. Wounds, however trifling they may seem at the time they are received, have a tendency here to become serious, under the influence of the damp and heat which favor putrefaction. The surrounding parts soften and mortify; feeling

in the wound becomes deadened, and gangrene speedily follows. It becomes therefore a matter of great importance to apply remedies in time, in order to prevent dangerous, not to say fatal, consequences.

At Balancan a mysterious personage, of French extraction, had been mentioned to me as inhabiting a small isolated house near Cabecera. No one knew what had attracted him to these regions, where, for seven years, he had led a most retired life, living by the labors of his hands, and avoiding, as far as possible, all communication with his neighbors. The people at large, fond of the marvellous, pronounced him of noble birth, and imagined his misanthropy to be the result of unrequited affection. The few who knew him personally, united in praising his good qualities. I determined to visit this recluse, and accordingly Morin and myself, almost immediately on landing at Cabecera, wended our way to his residence. After a tolerably long walk through the woods, we saw traces of a clearing, which led to an avenue of bananna trees, at the extremity of which we found his hut. The door being open, we had no hesitation in going in. The first object which met our eyes, was a man reclining in a hammock. He was very slightly clad, after the manner of the Indians. When we entered he turned his head indifferently, but the look he gave us was one of great astonishment. Without waiting for him to speak, I said, "We are French travellers, in need of your hospitality." At these words he sprang up, and extended his hand. He was a man slight in figure, apparently from the south of France, in whom nervous energy seemed to preponderate over muscular strength. Obviously of only middle age, it was easy to perceive that misfortune rather than time had blanched his head, and withered his features. "For the first time since I have been living in this desert," said he, much moved, "for the first time in seven years, I can press the hand of a countryman!" His

eyes were moist, but his weakness passed in a moment, and he hastened to offer us a simple collation, of which we gladly partook. While seated at his more than frugal board, we told him of the object of our visit to the country, and made some inquiries concerning it, without, however, putting aside the reserve which was imposed on us as strangers. Before we had got through with our meal, and before we had established more intimate relations, we heard the sound of footsteps, and turning, saw in the door-way a young Indian girl, leading two children by the hand. On sight of us she started back, and uttered an exclamation of alarm. "This is my little family," said the recluse smiling, "do not feel astonished at finding it somewhat wild, like the country." Then turning to the girl, he spoke a few words to her in some strange Indian dialect. She at once became reassured, entered timidly, and seating herself on the side of the hammock, raised her eyes, full of innocent curiosity, and regarded us attentively. Confidence was soon restored, and the suspicious-looking strangers became speedily established as guests, almost as friends.

Human life may be looked upon as a comedy by cold sceptics, who pride themselves on contemplating it from an exalted point of view; but with those who play their part in it with an ardent, impassioned heart, it is often a melancholy, sometimes even a terrible drama. The recluse of the Usumasinta belonged to this latter category. Favored by fortune, he had enjoyed all the delights of civilized society, yet in the precarious, almost squalid condition to which he had voluntarily reduced himself, he considered that he was nearer happiness than he had ever been before. His meteor-like existence, which had glittered with passing brightness only to be extinguished at last in the obscurity of a desert, would furnish me with a chapter full of romance, if I were to transcribe his history literally as it fell from his lips. But such a digres-

sion would lead me far from my subject, and would furthermore be out of place in this connection.

It was quite an event for the inhabitants of the hut—this visit of two strangers, and these strangers Frenchmen. We could scarcely get away from our host, so urgently did he insist on our remaining with him. Each day he devised some new amusement. We hunted the boas, which were numerous in the forest; we beat the savannas in search of deer, and shot strange larks with black circles about their necks (*sturnus Ludovicianus* L.); we fished in the stream for unknown fish; and when evening came, we united around the modest table of our host and conversed principally of the past, with that *abandon* which springs up so naturally between men of the same country in distant lands. The young Indian girl, while nursing her children, listened attentively to those accents which she could not comprehend; but her eye curiously followed all of our movements, and her varying feelings betrayed themselves with amusing vivacity in her face. She was beautiful, considered as a daughter of her race; nature, of course, had not endowed her with those pure and harmonious features which alone belong to the European families, but hers were regular, and expressive of affection and sadness.

On the day of our departure, our host silently accompanied us to the river; his little family had preceded us to the same spot. It was a sad moment for us all. We pressed the hand of the poor recluse, who turned away his face to hide his emotion. The oars moved, the canoe left the shore, and the tie which had momentarily united us was broken! I carried away a sacred trust, but I left behind me a bleeding wound which I had innocently reopened.

We were bound to Tenosique, three leagues from Cabecera, beyond which, in the distance, loomed up the blue crests of the mountains, a charming spectacle, which arrested my attention and seemed to revive my strength. I felt sure that in breath-

ing the pure air of those heights I should obtain a new lease of life, but I was again doomed to disappointment. The temperature on these slight elevations preserves its tropical character, and the solitudes which separate Tabasco from Peten are consumed by the same fire. In traversing them, the traveller has need of all the strength and energy of health. I resolved therefore not to proceed further until my own was restored.

It was the warmest season of the year (May). The thermometer was at 97° of Fahrenheit during the day, and 89° at night! Not a breath of air stirred; the leaves were never ruffled; the very shadows of the trees seemed to radiate heat, and the tepid waters of the river did not in the least refresh the bather. At table our faces streamed with perspiration, which did not cease even while lying in our hammocks! However great our fatigue, we could not sleep. The Indians endure this heat like stoics, but it overpowers the Creoles. Lying motionless in their hammocks, they pray fervently for rain, and drink immoderately without being able to quench their thirst.

Enervated by abstinence and exhausted by fatigue, I felt very keenly the excessive heat. I saw before me golden mangoes and luscious water melons, and other refreshing fruits of which I was interdicted the enjoyment, my diet being limited to a few cups of milk. Under this system, and by taking frequent doses of opium, I succeeded in checking my disorder, while, by the aid of emollient plasters, my bruise gradually became healed. I finally considered myself convalescent, and it is probable I should have entirely recovered my health if I could only have forced myself to remain quiet. During my illness I was dosed with a tea prepared from the leaf of a species of plantain tree called *yanten*, which is highly prized in this country. It is soothing in its effects, like marsh-mallow, but I think has no other particular virtue. The inhabitants regale themselves with an infusion of a sarmentous plant called

pimientillo, which grows wild in the woods. It is very palatable, and has the taste of tea with a slight flavor of cloves.

To remain longer at Tenosique seemed to me unendurable, so I commenced making preparations for my departure on the first symptoms of convalescence. I resolved, however, first to visit the rapids of the Uusumasinta, involving an excursion of three or four days on the river. After leaving the village it took us four hours to reach the *sierras*, a confused mass of mountains which seems to oppose an effectual barrier to navigation. But at the very moment when every issue appears to be closed, the chain suddenly opens, leaving a narrow passage through which the waters dash impetuously. This passage is known under the name of *Boca del Cerro*, mouth of the mountain.

Between the walls of this gorge the spectacle was singularly imposing. Huge cliffs rise loftily on both sides, and the stream strangled between them is forced to gain in depth what it lacks in breadth. Absorbed in silent admiration of the spectacle, I did not perceive that our boatmen had ceased rowing, until one of them whistled in a manner peculiar to the Indians when they wish to attract attention.

"What is the matter?" I inquired of Morin.

"It is a boat which they see yonder," he replied, "and in which they seem to be greatly interested."

"Tell them to go on, or we shall not get through before night."

Morin spoke for a while with the *patron*, and learned from him, after some circumlocution, that the canoe in question, which was just then hidden from sight by the meanderings of the passage, belonged to the independent or unconquered Indians, who were established on the heights above us. During this explanation the object of our notice again came in view, and we could see a man in it who appeared to be paddling with the greatest vigor.

I was deeply interested, and told Morin that I should like to have a nearer sight of this child of nature. "What say you, shall we give him chase?"

Morin's love of adventure was excited by the proposal, and, addressing himself to the men, he cried in a sailor-like voice, "Come, boys, steady with your oars there, and make ready to board that craft!"

"You do not intend, *señor*, to harm that Indian?" asked José, the older of the two sailors, dipping his oar indolently in the water.

"God forbid!" I answered. "I only wish to talk with him."

"But his comrades, *señor*, are probably not far distant," he suggested, hesitatingly.

"Never mind! Go ahead!" cried Morin, thinking, doubtless, of the history of the Conquest. "If the savages prove to be wanting in respect to us, we will soon bring them to reason!"

I added to this speech the promise of a *peso* each, provided we caught up with the boat.

All now seemed to acquiesce in my proposal, and the chase began. But our boatmen, apparently apprehensive of a quarrel, displayed but little ardor; yet, as everything continued peaceful and silent, they gradually took courage and seriously began the pursuit.

As we continued, the stream became more tortuous and rapid, the mountains more abrupt, and the passage narrower. Soon we found ourselves imprisoned between high, grey rocks, rising vertically from the water, resembling embattled towers or crumbling ramparts. Gradually the slopes seemed to lean more towards each other, the bed of the river became still narrower, and the waters became dark and sullen under the shadow of the sierras. We were evidently gaining upon our fugitive, and there was no chance of his escape. This he doubtless perceived, for he finally ceased all efforts and

seated himself in the bottom of his canoe motionless, like a man resigned to his fate. We kept on directly towards him, when suddenly an arrow, aimed from the neighboring heights, whistled past us into the stream. Stimulated by this warning, our boatmen hastily bore down on the *cayuco*, and ran her against the rocks, out of reach of further missiles. I was now obliged to restrain Morin, who considered that war had been declared, and was ready to make a hostile demonstration on our prisoner. The latter, however, did not manifest any great alarm, but came quietly on board our *cayuco*, to which we fastened his own. He was about fifty years of age, of a brutal, expressionless face. His dress consisted of a pair of cotton drawers and a miserable straw hat. I hastened to explain to him that we had no hostile designs, but, on the contrary, proposed to elevate him to the dignity of our pilot, with liberal recompense for his services. To this flattering proposition he made no reply, but looked distrustful and dark, and it was easy to see that he did not like our infringement on his liberty. I ordered Morin to hand him some banannas, which he accepted with the utmost indifference; but a little glass of rum, which he took at the instance of our boatmen, he drank with an expression of satisfaction. Decidedly he was a most taciturn personage, and had beside but little intelligence.

After some further attempts to draw him out, we gave him up as impracticable, and continued our course, keeping him with us nevertheless, as a kind of hostage against further interruption. The roar of the falls became every moment more distinct, and the channel of the stream was obstructed by rocks and whirlpools, among which we proceeded with the greatest difficulty. Three times the current drove our little canoe against the rocks with such violence as nearly to swamp us. Impassive and silent, our prisoner took no part in the management of the boat. Perhaps he secretly desired to see us overset and drowned. At last, after infinite labor, we

reached the centre of the gap in the mountains, and ran into a little bay, sheltered by an abrupt promontory. Here I determined to *bivouac*. While the boatmen arranged our encampment, I clambered up the huge polished rocks which the stream has here heaped together, in order to take in at a glance the scene I had come so far to witness. I must confess to some disappointment at sight of a series of rapids, broken into whirls of foam, but of insufficient volume to produce a striking effect or profound impression. Three leagues from here is a second rapid, which effectually obstructs navigation. I desired much to go to visit it, but we had neglected to provide ourselves with a rope—an indispensable auxiliary in overcoming the first obstruction. We were consequently forced to abandon the undertaking.

Night fell suddenly upon us; every object was then invested with that grand solemnity which follows the dying day in these virginal countries. The concentrated light of our fire, reflected by the cataract, and by the rough rocks around us, the tops of which were lost in the darkness, the murmur of the waters rushing through the deep gorge of the mountains, the howling of the monkeys in the distance, and the screams of nocturnal birds, all contributed to make up a scene as difficult to describe as to forget. While abandoning myself to the various impressions which succeeded each other in my mind, I perceived that our prisoner had become reconciled to his position, for he philosophically took his share of the provisions we had brought, and drank all that was given to him. The presence of our boatmen, like himself, of Indian origin, the exhilaration produced by the rum, and the spirit of adventure which breathed around us, acted at the same time upon his brain and the muscles of his tongue, which at last began to perform its functions. I questioned him concerning the ancient ruins which have been (erroneously I think) described as existing near this locality. Our Indian confirmed what I

had previously heard at Tenosique, namely, that no ruins are to be found here. Perhaps the castellated rocks which I have before mentioned, have led to this error, and credit has thus been given to human industry for a simple freak of nature.* It would indeed be astonishing if there existed ruins of importance on the upper course of the Usumasinta, since the annals of the new world do not mention any civilization or culture in all the mountainous region to the east of Peten. Over these unexplored Cordilleras roam, under the name of *Lacandones* or *Caribs*, the weak remains of an Indian nationality, now poor, inoffensive savages, who only ask the Spaniards to tolerate them in their last place of refuge. The most daring among them sometimes venture as far as the frontier villages to procure, by means of exchange, some of the necessities of life. But, as a general rule, they shun all intercourse with the whites, and conceal themselves from them, watching their movements from their own high retreats. Armed with bows and arrows, as in pr mitive days, the discharge of fire-arms still alarms them. Like their fathers before them, they are polytheists, and practise polygamy. Each wife has her separate house and field for cultivation; and, as among all barbarians, the severest labor devolves on the weaker sex. Such was the substance of the information gleaned from our prisoner.†

* A published document, p. 68, of the *Recueil des Antiquités Mexicaines*, makes mention of extraordinary and magnificent ruins situated two leagues distant from Tenosique, on the banks of the Usumasinta. True, the author does not describe them, and even confesses that he never visited them.

† The Indians who inhabit the upper waters and tributaries of the Usumasinta are chiefly of the ancient and indomitable stock of the Lacandones, to whom have been aggregated the remnants of other and cognate Indian families, such as the Manches, Tcholes, Puchutlas, etc., who were gradually pressed back by the Spaniards, or who abandoned their original seats for independence in the wilderness. The region which they occupy, although it was penetrated in various directions by several religio-military expeditions under the crown, has never been explored in any just sense of the word, and is at present as little known as the interior of Africa. Its inhabitants, however, since the date

"Well, José," I inquired of our *patron*, "what do you think of our neighbors, the Caribs? Will they trouble us to-night?"

of the last Spanish invasion, sometime about the year 1700, seem to have abandoned their previous predatory habits, and contented themselves with rigidly preserving their isolation and independence. A few occasionally come down the Usumasinta to the frontier towns of Chiapas and Tabasco, bringing a little tobacco, gum, or sarsaparilla, to exchange for iron and ornaments. They are uncommunicative, and, as soon as their little traffic is concluded, disappear by obscure or unknown paths.

M. Waldeck, during his stay in Palenque, and in some of his subsequent wanderings, seems to have fallen in with some Indians of this stock, but considerably changed by contact with civilization, of whom he has given us the following account:

"Such of the Lacandones as I have seen, speak a dialect of the Maya language. They are all idolaters, but it is difficult to ascertain the nature of their worship, notwithstanding that those who live in the villages, as well as those who roam in the forests, it is well known, have their hidden temples or places of worship, in which they continue the religious practices of their ancestors. I have already spoken of those whom I encountered on the other side of the mountains, in going from Palenque to Tumbala. Although here they go regularly to mass and pay their tithes, it is in consideration of being allowed their liberty in all other respects. Any attempt to interfere with their secret worship, or to find out and destroy their idols, revives all their savage energy and cruelty. In respect of their ancient habits, they have undergone but little change. Their costume is the same with that of the figures which are found in the *bas-reliefs* of Palenque and Ocosingo. Their ancient superstitions and notions are equally unchanged. They will prevaricate with the utmost effrontery; nor will they hesitate a moment in perjuring themselves before the image of the Virgin, and in the name of all the saints of paradise. In matters of importance, it is dangerous to trust their oaths, unless taken in the name of their ancient demi-god *Ballam*. They stand in mortal dread of fire-arms, and will not even look in the direction where they imagine a musket is to be seen. The following circumstance, which occurred near the close of the last century, would seem to prove that they had not then entirely abandoned the practice of cannibalism with which they were anciently charged. It appears that a young Lacandon became devotedly attached to a girl of the same race to such a degree that it was scarcely possible to separate him for a moment from her side. After a few months he was observed to fall into a profound melancholy, the more singular as it was well known that his attachment was reciprocated. One day the girl disappeared, and could not be found. The excitement and inquietude created by this event did not however extend to the

"Who can tell, *señor?*"

"If they do," I continued, "they must be possessed of wings, for what with the rapids and these walls for our protection, they must be able to fly in order to reach us!"

"You do not know the Caribs, *señor;* they can descend the river."

This simple and natural means had never occurred to me.

"Verily," I added, turning to Morin, "there is nothing to prevent their doing so!"

Morin seemed much disturbed by this suggestion, and proposed to extinguish our fire as a precaution.

lover. On the contrary, he seemed to be more tranquil and contented than ever. His conduct excited suspicion; he was closely watched, and finally tracked to a secluded place in the forest, where he was taken in the act of devouring a portion of the arm of a human being. Further investigation disclosed the horrible truth that he had killed the object of his love, and roasted her body, coming daily to feast on a portion of her flesh. When arrested and interrogated, he stated, with the utmost ingenuousness, that what he had done had been simply from excess of affection, and that each portion of her flesh that he had eaten had inspired him with new and inexpressible delight. He was tried and condemned—not to the punishment of death, but to fulfill the office of executioner in the capital! A single additional circumstance will be enough to show that the neighborhood and contact of Christian populations have not advanced these tribes a single step in civilization. Knowing that they were accustomed to eat the great red monkeys called *alûates*, I inquired of an Indian the origin of this singular practice. His reply I thought worthy of preserving: 'Our ancestors killed and ate their enemies; but since the Spaniards, who are strongest, have come, they do not allow us to continue this custom, and do not even permit us to eat what of right belongs to us, our children. Hence it is that we attack these little men of the woods, whose flesh is equally good, and whom we are allowed to kill with impunity.' Such is the actual condition of the portions of this people whom the Spanish priests pretend to have converted and civilized!

"But besides these, there exists in the recesses of the unexplored mountains of the interior, a large native population, who have no sort of relations, neither with the whites nor with the Indians of the towns, of whom I have spoken above. Up to this time no one has been able to penetrate into their retreats, equally defended by the configuration of the country and their own ferocity." —*Voyage dans l' Yucatan*, p. 42. For further details, historical and otherwise, see "*The States of Central America*," etc., chap. xxv.—*T.*

"It would be useless now to do so," observed José. "The Indians know where we are."

"In this case we must prepare for the worst."

Morin and myself held a consultation, and we took measures against a surprise, and arranged for a retreat if occasion required.

"Happen what may," I said, on returning to our camp, "our prisoner will serve as a hostage. We must not lose sight of him, but make him sleep between us."

This precautionary measure being taken, we wrapped ourselves in our cloaks and lay down for the night. Little by little my ideas became confused, the agitation of my mind gradually subsided, the noise of the cataract sounded in my ears only as a faint murmur, and I fell into a deep sleep, as did also my companion.

Next morning, at break of day, we opened our eyes and looked for our prisoner. But he and his canoe had disappeared together!

No one at Tenosique knows anything of the Usumasinta above the rapids, nor have they any satisfactory information as to its source. After great floods, uprooted trees often float down, of a kind unknown in the country, belonging to the coniferous family. They are real pines, torn by the *Rio Machaquilan* from the heights of Dolores and Poptun, in the centre of Peten. The inhabitants here collect and make use of these waifs without inquiring whence they come.

According to the best information I could obtain of this most important body of water in Central America, it rises in the mountains of Peten, not far from the village of *San Luis*. It first runs in a south-westerly direction, under the name of Santa Ysabel, then bending to the westward, it unites with the *Rio Lacantun* or *Chisoy* (which is of about the same size), after having received the Machaquilan, the *San Juan*, the *Cano*, and the San Pedro, its principal tributaries

from the right. Then, doubled in volume, it runs towards the north, under the name of *Rio de la Pasion*, which it again changes, at Tenosique, for that of Usumasinta. The vast extent of territory which it irrigates, in the upper part of its course, is a mountainous solitude, covered with forests, the possession of which has never been disputed with the Indians. Intrenched in this region of country, so difficult of access, these last remnants of the aborigines roam at will over all western Peten, but concentrate particularly at the confluence of the rivers Lacantun and Usumasinta. They are of Maya extraction, and their only communication with the whites is by way of exchange, from time to time, of their cacao and tobacco with the inhabitants of Peten and Vera Paz for salt, *machetes*, and other trifling articles.

At Tenosique, after breaking through, the chain of mountains which separates the Mexican States from those of Central America, the Usumasinta hollows out for itself a deep bed in the alluvial plain beyond, and flows through three outlets into the Gulf of Mexico. The western outlet preserves its Indian name, and unites with the *Rio de Grijalva** above *Frontéra*. The middle outlet, called *San Pedrito*, flows directly into the sea, where it forms the bar of *San Pedro y Pablo*. The third is the Rio Palizada, which empties into the Lagoon of Terminos.

From the rapids of Tenosique to the lagoon of Las Cruces, which comes before that of Terminos, the Usumasinta is eighty leagues in length. But so meandering is its course, that the interval between the two points does not exceed thirty leagues in a direct line. From Estapilla, for instance, to Tenosique it is but two leagues and a half by land, but at least eight

* Called also *Rio de Tabasco*. Why not permit the river to bear its original name, in honor of the courageous adventurer who lost his life in its discovery? Besides, the name Tabasco is already perpetuated in that of the country itself.

leagues by the river. The river is navigable up to the first rapids, for boats drawing twelve feet of water, for ten months in the year. In April and May, during low water, it is navigable only for canoes. With the first rains the waters rise three yards, and continue to swell during the winter, when the current becomes so strong that small boats do not venture to encounter it.

Above the obstacles which I have indicated, the stream again becomes navigable, at least for *cayucos*. It would, no doubt, be easy to clear its bed of the calcareous rocks which obstruct it at a few points, in which case it would afford, in connection with its affluents, a system of interior navigation of great importance for Guatemala; since it would connect the province of Totonicapan, by means of the river Chisoy, and the district of Peten, by means of the Cano, with the Gulf of Mexico. "The Lacandon Indians," says the historian Juarros, "once had as many as four hundred and twenty-four canoes on the Rio de la Pasion; and if advantage were taken of the facilities afforded by this stream, not only might these savages be reduced to submission, but also commercial relations be established with Peten, Tabasco, Campeachy and Vera Cruz." But these relations remain as they were when Juarros wrote, and it is not likely that they will be changed for a long time to come, at least not in the way which he indicates.

In a word, the river system of the Usumasinta, which has an extent of at least one hundred and fifty leagues, would acquire a great importance if the population bordering it were active and industrious. A government jealous of national prosperity, would not then neglect to improve a route of communication which is susceptible not only of bringing together distant points, but of uniting among themselves adjacent provinces, now wholly separated by the configuration of the country. It only remains to add, that these views, thanks to the actual condition of the country, lose much of their interest, since the

river, for the greater part of its course, only waters the profoundest solitudes.

I returned from my excursion suffering from derangement of the stomach, accompanied by fever, which proved too well that I had abused my physical powers. Dysentery manifested itself anew, and soon reduced me to a state of feebleness and prostration from which nothing could rouse me, except excruciating pain. I had abundant reasons for dreading a malady which before, on the coast of Africa, had brought me to the gate of the tomb; then science and careful treatment were able, but with difficulty, to preserve my life; but now I was alone, left wholly to my own inspirations, and without other assistance than that of an inexperienced seaman. In this state of prostration, when all that remained of the faculties were absorbed in the care of the physical system, the malady gathered violence from the decline of physical forces. On the night of the third day, I felt so badly that I called Morin to my side, in the belief that I was going to die; and I can declare, without vain ostentation, that the sacrifice of my life would have cost me little had it not been for the recollections of a tender mother, who had made me swear to return, and who now counted the days of my absence with anxious solicitude. Alas, how I felt the idleness of my promise! Apart from sentiments of this kind, it is, after all, less hard than is imagined to die at a distance from home, where the objects which surround you offer no cherished and familiar images, associated with your very existence, but are strange and cold—where neither affection nor sympathy assist you to support your sufferings—and where distance, which, in its influence, is like the lapse of time, has weakened in your heart its sweetest and dearest recollections! Then, when you have come to look on yourself as an isolated being in creation, the separation becomes less difficult, and you regard the approach of the fatal moment with a spirit firmer and more resigned. Such, at any

rate, are the impressions of a sick man abandoned on a bed of pain; but it is only needful that health should return to restore tenacity of life, and reinstate nature in all of her rights.

On the fourth day, the fever diminished, and the crisis of the disease appeared to have passed. Recalled to life, as it were, my energy returned, and everything around me wore a cheerful aspect; hope glided into my heart, and inspired me with the desire of recovery. I had conceived a horror of the village of Tenosique, where the heat had greatly increased my sufferings, and I thought that exercise, and, above all, change of air, would hasten my convalescence. Acting upon this idea, the instant I was able, I commenced preparations for our departure. I ordered mules, horses, guides and provisions. Morin procured three pounds of flour which were made up into biscuits; these, with a melon which we had preserved in sugar, and a few eggs packed in lime, were reserved for my especial use. Two days after, although still very feeble, I was lifted on my horse, and we took the road to Peten, from which place we were separated by eighty leagues of forest.

Tenosique is the last inhabited point in Tabasco to the south-east. It is a small town, consisting of only about a hundred huts, surrounded by impenetrable forests, and in all respects resembles the other little towns on the river which I have already described. Its population is much the same, except that it has a larger infusion of Indian blood. Indeed, here as everywhere else in Spanish America, we find the European element in the population constantly diminishing as we approach the wilderness, until finally it is wholly lost in the prevailing aboriginal type.

In leaving Tenosique, I left behind me those vast alluvions where nature manifests her utmost vitality and vigor, but where she is scarcely less prolific in good than in evil productions. The tallest trees, as well as the humblest plants, distil

the most bitter and caustic juices. The lagoons and rivers are infested with alligators. Venomous reptiles and annoying insects abound everywhere. The wasp, the scorpion, stinging ants, and myriads of mosquitos, combine to disgust and distress the traveller. Even the inoffensive reptiles of our European marshes, are here endowed with formidable jaws or implacable stings. Man attempts in vain to enjoy the coolness of the water or the shade of the trees; his enemies are ubiquitous, and his life is a constant effort to repel their attacks. Neither domestic nor wild animals escape. Flies swarm around them, and deposit their *larvæ* in their flesh, producing painful sores and ulcers, which spread and fester under the combined effects of heat and dampness, and end in death. When the rains cease, miasmas are generated under a burning sun from a reeking soil, which poison the atmosphere, and load every breeze with pestilential maladies. Against these evils and disadvantages we find a country clothed in the garb of eternal youth, a genial soil ready to repay the toil of the husbandman a thousand fold, and which produces all the staples of the tropics in greatest perfection. It may, however, be doubted if the compensation be commensurate with the cost.

Socially, this remote corner of the globe presents no attractions. In fact, both Tabasco and Chiapas seem to be behind the other States of the Mexican republic in all that goes to make up civilization. The provisions for education, even in the largest towns, are mean and miserable, and liberal acquirements are unattainable. The clergy are avaricious and dissolute, and by common agreement only administer the rites and offices of the Church for arbitrary considerations, proportionate to the means of their parishioners, and which they rigidly exact. It is marvellous, indeed, that even the forms of religion are preserved in a country where its ministers are so negligent of their duty, and so unworthy of their trust. Politically, these little States afford all too faithful copies of the federal govern-

ment itself. Anarchy is the rule of their existence, and public affairs are administered arbitrarily, and with the most selfish views, by a succession of unscrupulous demagogues, who attain to office through a common career of conspiracy and revolution. Accustomed to these violent changes, the people submit to them without surprise or murmur, and even the best and most patriotic citizens of the State have long ago abandoned any effort to remedy a state of things which, however much they may deplore, they believe to be incurable and hopeless.

V.

THE FOREST.

The mystery surrounding Peten—Departure from Tenosique—*Arrieros*—Absence of roads—Perils of the saddle—Thorns and their torments—Encampment—Regularity of the seasons—Festival of Saint Isidore—Indian customs—The commissariat—Cannibalism—A character—Don Diego de la Cueva—His adventures, and how he came to be in Tenosique—The forest—Variety of vegetation—Vines and their peculiarities—Palm trees—Insignificance of man before the grandeur of nature—Reflections—The *aristolochia grandiflora*—Multitudes of *coleoptera*—*Paso del Monte*—Torrent of Yalchilan—Drouth of the country—Dolores—Emergence from the forest—Savannas—A nameless lake—Saclue—Aspect of the country—Vanilla—Lake of Itza—Town of Flores—Reported death of Don Diego.

I SUPPOSED, when I landed in Havana, that I should be able to procure there all the information which I desired concerning the neighboring continent. I particularly expected to obtain some certain directions as to the best mode of reaching the remarkable district and lake of Peten, which I looked upon as the principal object of my expedition. But the best informed people, and those who were supposed to be most learned, were ignorant even of its name, and smiled when they told me that if ever I reached it, I might consider myself its discoverer! At Campeachy I found Peten rather better known, but no one could tell me how to get to it. It was only at Palizada that I obtained sufficient information to direct me to Tenosique, beyond which all was obscure. I was astonished at the indifference of the people concerning the geography of a country which so nearly concerned them. However, I afterwards found myself much indebted to their ignorance for agreeable surprises, for, day by day, I saw disappear, with the mystery enshrouding the route, the obstacles

and dangers with which they had endeavored to alarm and discourage me.

It will be inferred from what I have said, that but slight relations exist between Peten and Tabasco. At long intervals, a small caravan journeys from the interior towards the Usumasinta, with tobacco, cheese, and a few articles from Belize, which are exchanged for salt and cacao; but they rarely proceed beyond Tenosique. These chance expeditions are not encouraged by reciprocity; the inhabitants of the coast considering, and very justly, that the profits of the journey do not compensate for its cost and fatigue. We had great difficulty, therefore, in procuring the three mules and two horses which we required for our expedition, the hire of each being eight dollars, each muleteer, or *arriero*, receiving the same sum in addition for his own services, beside his provisions for the whole journey. The entire expense of our outfit amounted to a hundred and ten dollars.

I was struck, during this little campaign, with the vigor and elasticity which men display, even in the warmest of climates, who have been inured from their infancy to constant exercise. My muleteers were almost puny in appearance, and one of them was by no means young, yet they toiled steadily for twelve consecutive days without apparently being more fatigued than ourselves. Every morning, by day-break, they packed the mules and saddled the horses. Then, strapping on their own backs all of our fragile articles, they led the way, whipping up the animals, or running by their side, repairing all damages, and clearing our path of obstructions. When we encamped, they arranged our hammocks for the night, made a fire, brought water, cooked our meals, and after having attended to these duties, climbed the adjacent trees to cut green branches, which in these grassless forests are used as fodder. Such is the routine of labor which they are obliged to go through with, during these long and weary journeys;

and although they receive but scanty wages and miserable fare, their work is performed cheerfully and without subsequent demands for additional pay.

I had two of these men in my service, who took entire care of our caravan consisting of Don Diego (a singular character who joined us at Tenosique, and of whom I shall have occasion to speak further), myself, and Morin. There were in all five of us, who plunged into the almost untracked wilderness of forests, mountains, plains, swamps, and rivers which intervenes between Tenosique and Peten. We were not long in finding out the kind of difficulties we should have to contend with. In this portion of America, the opening of roads is entirely given up to those who travel, and these rarely waste time in making improvements. Even when they do so, it frequently happens that their work becomes destroyed months before another party of travellers pass that way, who, in turn, only make such repairs as are absolutely necessary for their own passage. Pedestrians may clamber over all obstacles, but the unfortunate horseman is not only fettered in his movements, but is exposed to numberless mishaps. Woe be to him if he does not correctly estimate the height of projecting limbs, or the strength of the vines which hang in festoons across his path. His horse, innocent of a bit, and directed only by a halter, is not easily controlled, and, always eager to join the mules, whose tinkling bells he hears in advance, presses forward, regardless alike of the projecting limbs and drooping vines, which drag his rider into the mud or threaten him with the fate of Absalom. Nor is the annoyance, to say nothing of the danger of this kind of contact, diminished by the fact that nearly every *bejuco* or vine is armed with prickles or thorns which tear up the skin and inflict the most painful wounds. To avoid these, the rider must drop on his horse's neck, dodge to his saddle-bow, or, if need be, throw himself to the ground. It would be difficult in-

deed, to enumerate all the different varieties of spines and thorns which bristle on the strange plants of these vast forests. Some are straight, others hooked, round, flat, and angular, and of all sizes, from the proportions of a large awl down to those of the finest needle. The path, or rather the track which the traveller is obliged to follow, is often indistinct, and can only be traced with difficulty. Sometimes it is intercepted by the trunk of a colossal tree, which, in falling, has dragged down with it a wilderness of smaller trees and a tangled mass of vines, effectually prohibiting passage. The sun streams down through the opening which the fallen monarch has left in the forest, on a confused mass of splintered trunks and wilting verdure, which remains undisturbed until it has crumbled into dust before the rapid advances of tropical decay. Meanwhile, the traveller who passes that way picks his path around the obstruction, leaving only an obscure trace of his passage, which in a few days becomes undistinguishable. Of course there are no bridges, and streams that cannot be forded must be crossed by swimming, or on rafts which every party of travellers must construct for themselves. If, as sometimes happens, the rivers are flooded, no resource is left but to encamp on their banks and await quietly the fall of the waters. The reader will perceive, therefore, that journeying in Tabasco has its difficulties and dangers, as well as its romance and excitement.

Eight hours after leaving Tenosique we encamped for the night. I was weary and so much exhausted that Morin was obliged to assist me in dismounting, and I stretched myself on a mat on the ground, motionless, and physically wholly prostrated. But my intellect was as clear and as active as ever. Gazing upwards into the azure sky, where a few white clouds were floating, appearing to drift away into the tree tops on either hand, I devoutly thanked Heaven for having given me strength for this first day's journey from the pestilential

spot where I had suffered so much, and prayed that it might endure until we reached the higher and cooler regions for which we were bound. Never before did I enjoy the shade, the repose, the verdure of the forest, the singing of the birds, nor any of the manifold beauties of nature with such calm, delicious satisfaction. In the faintest ray of sunlight gilding a blade of grass, even in the chirps of the cricket, there was an appeal to my sense of enjoyment which attached me more and more to life, and my desire for existence, previously so weak, became gradually strengthened, until I felt assured that I should not die.

With night came storm, for, as I have said, it was May, and the change of seasons under the tropics takes place with wonderful regularity. In anticipation of it, the Indians of Tenosique had promenaded the streets of the town for some days previous to our departure, bearing in their midst the image of Saint Isidore, the patron of laborers. My ears rung for a long time with the noise of this solemnity, the period of which coincides very accurately with that of the return of the rains. The bells were rung for three consecutive days and nights, and their clangor was heightened by the din of drums and the shrieks of aboriginal fifes, the sound of which seemed to quiver like an arrow in my brain. The Spaniards, who first introduced these barbaric festivals among the Indians as a means of impressing their imaginations, have been justly punished by their perpetuation. In vain do they try every year to moderate the zeal of their pupils, and induce them to abridge the fantastic ceremonials of the festival. The Indian is tenacious in his habits, and he clings to the *fiesta* of Saint Isidore with all his natural obstinacy, not less because his fathers did so before him, than because it affords him an opportunity for indulging in drink beyond the ordinary license of the municipality. The *pulperias*, or liquor shops of Tenosique, were drained early in the festival, and then the musicians sought

contributions for sustaining their energies from private houses. I did not escape a somewhat unceremonious and noisy visit, but having nothing but a decoction of rhubarb to offer, I was soon relieved of their presence. I admired the philosophy with which they dispensed with their priest, who found some pretext for not taking an active part in the ceremonial. His place was supplied by an old Indian, who, if he did not go through with all the priestly functions, compensated for any deficiency by the number of his appeals to the *aguardiente* or native rum. The conduct of the revellers, I must say, was not always edifying, yet their procession through the streets, strewn in advance with palm branches, was both unique and picturesque. I remarked among them two little girls, peculiarly dressed, with plaited head-dresses in the Egyptian style, and of high antiquity, as shown by the ancient figures which I saw at Campeachy.

We passed a miserable night in a rude *rancho*, a shed of palm branches supported by poles, erected by government for the accommodation of travellers, and in the morning resumed our journey. The route offered no variations from the preceding day. The same deep forest spread on every hand, only our path became, if possible, narrower and less distinct. Nor was our commissariat of an encouraging order. In the hurry of departure, we had laid in but a scant supply of meat, trusting much to the representations of the people that the forest abounded in game, on which travellers to Peten literally feasted themselves and grew fat. Morin especially had high anticipations of subsisting exclusively on *faisanes*, or pheasants (for so the Spaniards designate the *crax alector*), and wild turkeys. But our experience did not come up either to promise or expectation, and our spoil from the forest was only one unfortunate monkey, which fell under Morin's eager aim. It was a female, and I felt a deep pang as I saw her dying on the ground, with one hand over the fatal wound, while firmly grasp-

ing her young one in her other arm! Our *arrieros*, however, were without weaknesses as regards monkeys, and lost no time after we had encamped, in putting the mother and her babe to roast before a slow fire. I must confess that the odor of the cooking was most savory, and when it was complete, I quite forgot the first act of the drama, and only regretted that I was on diet and could not take a part in the last! As to Diego, our travelling companion, he declared it to be a matter of conscience with him, and swore by Saint Dominick that he would fast forever before he would taste the flesh of a creature so resembling our own species. But when supper was ready, he found some means of compromise with his conscience, and ate monkey with the best of the party, confessing, when he was done, that if human beings were at all like monkeys, he did not so much wonder that there were cannibals in the world! Morin pronounced the flesh equal to turtle, and if the pheasants of his imagination were not to be had, he was willing to accept monkeys as a substitute.

Morin and myself were the only members of our party who rode, and we paid rather dearly for the distinction. Our clothes soon became torn into shreds by thorns, and our limbs were covered with bruises from rude and frequent contact with the trunks of trees. Our companion Diego, whom chance had thrown in our way, though less grand, was, on the whole, most fortunate. He was brisk, active, unburdened with much baggage, and not embarrassed with provisions—for we soon discovered that he depended on us for his supplies. He was still young, but with one of those puzzling faces alternately severe and boyish, which denote a large experience, but baffle all conjectures as to age; thin, trim, lithe as a weasel, with well-formed limbs, and thoroughly graceful in his movements. He dressed in the lightest of garbs, and was shod, after the fashion of the country, with sandals. His baggage consisted of one small bundle, which at first he carried in his hand, but afterwards placed on one of our mules.

keeping with him only a venerable mandolin, suspended jauntily between his shoulders. I was too ill during the first few days, and too much absorbed in my own reflections to converse with him, except in monosyllables; but Morin had lost no time in opening relations, and took an early opportunity of informing me that his name was Diego, and that he was a fellow of great talent and infinite humor.

"Caballero," said he to me one day, while walking by my side, referring to the bruise which I had received at Palenque, and from which I suffered greatly—"Caballero, if I had two drachms of alum and as many of turpentine, I could render you in three days as tough as an *arriero*."

"Ah, Señor Diego," I replied sadly, "if my medicine chest contained the proper remedies, you may be sure I should not long continue in the condition in which you find me."

"This, caballero, is what I call a fatality, to know the remedy yet retain the disease! If I only dared to suggest an expedient!"

"Suggest it, Señor Diego, for my present condition could scarcely be made worse. But how comes it that it is only at this late hour that I am made aware that you are a *medico?*"

"Yes, and even a surgeon, caballero. If your worship requires bleeding, you may depend on my lancet."

"Thanks! At the present moment I am by no means overburdened with blood. But may I inquire, Señor doctor, where you graduated? Was it at the university of Toledo, or in that of Salamanca?"

Diego shook his head at this question, then negligently replied, twirling his stick, "I have only myself to thank, caballero, for my knowledge and such little acquirements as I possess. My father, Don Antonio de la Cueva and dame Fortune were never friends, and neither the university of Toledo nor that of Salamanca confers diplomas on those who cannot pay for them."

"Then you got along without the university. Are you not from Andalusia, Señor Diego? The Andalusians are an ingenious people."

"I glory in saying that I am, señor. Ronda is my native place."

"I am quite familiar with Ronda," said I. "It is a curious, picturesque city, renowned, formerly, for the bravery of its soldiers, and celebrated now for the beauty of its women."

"And for the excellence of its hams, señor! If you should ever return there, inquire for the family of La Cueva. You will be told that it is an old one. We can date back to King Ferdinand the First, and even earlier."

"I shall have to take your word for this, Señor Diego, for it is not at all probable that I shall ever again visit your rocky and sun-burned mountains."

"Those mountains, señor, afford excellent pasturage. Were you ever shown the *Sierra Bermijo*, where Don Alonzo de Aguilar was killed in a charge against the Moors? One of my ancestors, Don Juan de la Cueva, concealed himself here, after the battle, in a cavern, where he lived for three years on acorns and roots, almost within sight of the Infidels."

"This is a real title of nobility, which has been transmitted to you, it appears, with your family name. Will you permit me to ask you a question, Señor Diego de la Cueva?"

"Say on, señor!"

"Well, I am constrained to believe, on meeting in this out-of-the-way country a gentleman of your position, that a strange series of circumstances must have led you so far from Ronda!"

"*Very* strange, is the term, señor. In truth, I can scarcely explain, without some reflection, how I happened to be here in this scarcely Christian country, of the very existence of which I was not long ago wholly ignorant."

"But you had an object in coming to Tenosique?"

"I was often told in my boyhood, caballero, that poverty is no crime; it was a favorite adage of my father's; but I did not believe it even then, and now I consider it at least a great mistake. It was a desire to repair the error of poverty in our family, señor, which induced me to travel, and it was in vain pursuit of fortune, that I was finally led to Tenosique, where your worship met me!"

"You must have been greatly misled concerning this country, Señor Diego, for I know of none in the world which offers so little prospect of wealth!"

Here Diego perceived that some explanation was necessary. He was fond of talking, and finding me ready to listen, began to tell me his history, prefacing it with an account of the origin and antiquity of his name. To his story I at first paid little attention, but by degrees I became interested in it, and ended by listening most attentively.

Our adventurer, it seems, left Spain after some incidents which it is unnecessary to repeat, in company with a party of dramatic artists for Havana. Here they constituted the principal attraction of the Tacon Theatre during a whole winter. The public was indulgent, the receipts were good, and all was progressing finely, when spring came, and with it the *vomito*. Three of the leading members of the company were carried off suddenly by it, while the remainder, full of consternation, threw up their engagements, and speedily returned to Cadiz. It was then that Don Diego, in no hurry to revisit his native land, allowed his imagination to seduce him into going to Yucatan "to make his fortune." He concluded, from some vague accounts which he had received, that he would there find a most productive, because hitherto neglected, mine of wealth. This illusion was dispelled at Merida, where his talents as a physician, surgeon and actor were not properly appreciated. He soon found that doubloons were much more plentiful in

Havana than in Yucatan, so he changed his line of business. He fancied that he had a latent talent for trade, and straightway purchased a mule and a little stock of goods, and set out for Valladolid, in company with a party of muleteers. The journey was successfully made, but the operation proved a failure—our speculator, in his selection of wares, not having sufficiently consulted the wants of the people. Decidedly he had mistaken his vocation! His goods became damaged, his mule died, and Diego soon found himself a bankrupt in a distant land!

But he had such infinite resources within himself, that he was not easily discouraged. Abandoning trade for the present, he speedily devised a new string for his bow. Valladolid is a retired, interior town, rarely visited by strangers; it probably never before sheltered so remarkable a personage as Don Diego de la Cueva. Rather talkative, agreeable in manner, full of industry and perseverance, having but few wants and much philosophy, he could surely get along, and so he did.

Diego had just reached this point in his story, and I was beginning to listen attentively to it, when our caravan, which preceded us, stopped short. I saw Morin dismount, and José, one of the muleteers, made mysterious signals for us to halt. A shot was fired, and a moment afterward our dog dragged quite a large object out of the thicket. As we approached, we recognized the beautiful plumage of a *hocco*. At sight of this bird, my companion made an exclamation, which I scarcely knew how to interpret.

"I will wager, Señor Diego," said I, "that in looking at this bird, you are quietly regretting the game with the long tail which unfortunately so greatly resembles our own species."

"Not at all, señor, I assure you, for I feel a sinking at the heart whenever I think of that cannibal-like repast. What occasions my present regret is, that I should have come up too late to hear the voice of this superb bird."

"Be consoled," I replied, "you have lost but little; it is no nightingale."

"What matter?" cried Diego quickly; "it would at least be new to my ear."

I looked inquiringly at my companion.

"I perceive your astonishment, caballero," said he, as we continued our journey; "know then, that the language of birds is as familiar to me as the Castilian tongue. Not that I flatter myself that I comprehend it," he continued, with a grimace, "but I can imitate it to perfection, as I will presently prove to you." As he said this, he gave a sharp whistle, followed by two or three trills of exquisite cadence, and a shower of delicious little notes in different keys. I looked at him full of admiration. "Of all the talents which I have received at the hands of nature, or have acquired through study," he resumed modestly, "this was the only one that was esteemed in Valladolid! Merit, señor, is a slim resource in a barbarous country like this. I should have starved without my mandoline and my flexibility of larynx. But this novelty had great success. Every one wished to hear me and to take lessons. Ah the nice dollars, the pretty doubloons which it cost me so little trouble to earn!"

"Judging by appearances, Señor Diego, there remains of these only a pleasing recollection!"

Our adventurer remained silent for a moment, as if absorbed with the memories of the past. Nevertheless my observation had not escaped him, for he exclaimed suddenly, with a burst of ironical laughter, "By Saint Dominick, señor, it is only too true! I doubt if I possess a *cuartillo!*"

"Ambition probably seduced you into tempting fortune on the green table; Spaniards are very fond of cards."

"No, no, I am not so great a fool! My misfortunes arose from a different cause. But the sun is sinking, and we will soon reach our stopping place for the night; so I will defer

my narrative, if your worship pleases, for the present, and resume it on another occasion."

"Certainly," I replied, "for I fear that I have already too greatly taxed your good nature."

An hour after, we reached a rising piece of ground intersected by a running stream, where we were happy in finding some shell-fish to add to our failing store of provisions. My supper, as usual, was limited to a calabash of tepid water, thickened with a little rice flour and sugar. My companions regaled themselves on the bird which they had killed, and which they praised highly, promising themselves on the next day to lay in a supply of the same kind.

When Diego's appetite was satisfied, he joined me beside the fire, lighted a *cigarette*, and resumed his story.

"You must know, caballero, that Valladolid is full of idlers. The people dislike work, and only care for amusement. If you should ever happen to go there, you will hear the song of the nightingale, the bullfinch, and the linnet. At least, they were all there in my time."

Here Diego made a slight pause, gracefully shook the ashes from his *cigarette*, and raised his eyes, gleaming with a secret satisfaction, to mine. "I flatter myself that I first introduced those birds into the New World. You have doubtless remarked, señor, that none of these varieties are to be met with in this country?"

I nodded assent, and he continued:

"It was necessary, in the first place, to imitate the warblings of those which are natives here, in order to give proof of my talent. Consequently, every morning I wandered out into the neighboring woods, and lay in wait for singing birds; but they were by no means common."

This observation of Diego's awakened some reminiscences, and I interrupted him. "You recall to my mind," said I, "an adventure which occurred to me in the forests of Palenque,

where I had the good fortune to hear the finest singer of the New World. But I paid dearly enough for this pleasure, since in pursuing the bird I fell, and the bruise from which I am suffering is the result."

"And I also, señor, paid dearly enough for my lessons, as you will soon learn. One day, in searching for a stream at which to quench my thirst, I lost my way. At first I thought it a small matter, but after ascending an eminence for the purpose of reconnoitering, I was cruelly disappointed, in failing to discover therefrom, as I hoped to do, the spires of Valladolid. All that met my eyes was a vast plain, covered with bushes, without any trace of cultivation. I gazed long on this solitude, and at last caught sight of a group of isolated trees, the dark green of which riveted my attention. I judged that there was water there certainly, and perhaps some habitation in its vicinity. In this hope, I crossed the country, in spite of the burning heat. The very air I breathed seemed on fire. After stopping several times to recover myself, I at last reached a *senote* hollowed out of the rocks, and shaded by large tamarind trees. My limbs tottered like those of a paralytic, while the trees seemed to be revolving around me. Seeing the water glisten in the sunlight, increased my thirst, and without waiting to find a path, I plunged in among the bushes and soon reached the water side. Judge of my surprise, señor, when I perceived in this retired spot a young girl, bathing. Hardly had she caught sight of me on the banks, than she screamed with terror, and made signs for me not to advance. I was so startled as to forget my thirst, although my throat was so parched as that I could speak."

Here Diego paused, either to collect his thoughts or to indulge in some pleasing remembrance. While he mechanically rolled up another *cigarette* between his fingers, I took up the thread of the conversation.

"Thus far I find nothing very alarming in your adventure, Señor Diego."

"Patience, caballero! It is difficult to judge what may result from trifles. You worship would be much astonished, if you could recall all the events of your past life and trace their relations and influences. Perhaps you might find that the most important consequences have resulted from trifles which at the time seemed scarcely worthy of notice."

Our adventurer pronounced these words with the gravity of a judge; and continued:

"The young girl whom I met, under these singular circumstances, resided in the village of *Cuncunul*, a league from Valladolid. She was beautiful for an Indian, and I had the weakness to become enamored of her. But I fear, señor, that when you learn what followed I shall forfeit your esteem."

"Go on, Señor Diego, your recital thus far has only served to improve my opinion of you."

"Well, from that time the village of Cuncunul became a most attractive spot to me, and I abandoned my studies entirely. I was well received by the parents of my enchantress, whom I propitiated by little gifts; but the maiden was reserved, and this reserve, instead of calming my passion, unfortunately only tended to inflame it. It became requisite that I should take some decisive step, for I was restless and uneasy. I made proposals to her father, which he graciously accepted, and he gave me his daughter. Two days after, our marriage took place, to the great chagrin of a certain youth of the village, who had previously been my rival, and who now became my enemy. I had many scruples about this marriage, for none of my family had ever made a *mesalliance*—the La Cuevas, señor, can all boast the unalloyed blue blood in their veins! But my wife was a good Catholic, and we all know that many

gentlemen at the time of the Conquest, and even great officers, did not scrupled about forming similar alliances with the natives."

"Yes; the illustrious Cortez himself may be cited as an example—did he not marry the famous Marina?"

"In truth, señor, I have heard that the great Cortez did not go quite so far. He was a Castilian, named Don Juan Xamarillo, who gave his hand and his name to the Doña Marina."

"Well, Señor Diego, you supplanted your rival; married your princess, and became a citizen of Cuncunul!"

"A citizen of Valladolid, señor, for I did not cease to reside there. I should have been happy, doubtless, but for the unfortunate events which followed. I had been married but three months when the quiet of the country was disturbed by troubles which had been brewing for several years. Valladolid 'pronounced!' A foe to discord, besides being a stranger, I remained neutral, although of course I had my own thoughts as to the merits of the quarrel. It was not the king of Spain, señor, who relied on the loyalty of the Indians and furnished them with arms. No; by Saint Dominick, he knew too much for that! These pagans, submissive and respectful under the old government, because arrogant when they felt themselves strong. They organized a conspiracy, and one fine day, profiting by the excitement produced in the city by the arrival of troops from Campeachy, they put their evil designs into execution, surprised the town and slaughtered many of its inhabitants."

"What! Señor Diego!" I exclaimed, interrupting him, "were you in Valladolid during the time of that disturbance? Tell me what happened, for the most contradictory reports were circulated about it in Merida, where I had just landed."

"I will tell you what happened, in two words, señor.

The Indians, pretending to have mistaken their orders, fired on us. Like many others I was walking about in quest of news, when a report was circulated that the suburbs of the town were being pillaged, while reports of guns from that quarter proved that the rumor was only too well founded. Fearing some catastrophe, I hastened to my dwelling, which was not far distant from the gate leading to Merida. Judge of my consternation, señor, on finding it empty. My house had been sacked, and my wife had disappeared. Overwhelmed by this sudden blow, I seated myself on my door step, seeking vainly to collect my thoughts, when Don Juan Gutierrez, one of my neighbors, shouted to me, as he ran, 'What are you about, Don Diego? you are a dead man if you remain here.' At these words I arose mechanically and followed him. I had not proceeded a hundred steps, when a ball whistled by me, grazing the rim of my hat. I turned suddenly and saw an Indian covered with blood, and of terrific aspect, loading his gun at the door of my house. It was Ambrosio, my former rival—at least I thought I recognized him; but I did not lose time in satisfying myself on that point, but with my companion continued my flight. We soon reached the country, where we found others, who, like ourselves, surprised and without means of defence, were flying from Valladolid. The miscreants fortunately did not venture to pursue us. They were restrained from farther violence by the troops of Campeachy, who themselves began to feel alarmed. We pushed on to Tecax, not feeling it safe to return home. A few remained there to await the turn of events. But for myself, having lost everything, and with the diabolical figure of Ambrosio standing in my doorway always in my mind, I preferred to follow Don Juan Gutierrez to the village of Iturbide, where his business called him. I then took the road to Champoton, intending to go to Campeachy, and remain there until I could safely return to Valladolid. But an excellent opportunity offering to

visit the Lagoon, I determined to go thither in the hope of realizing something from trade in dye-woods."

"But," I interrupted, "how did you expect to enter into that traffic without capital?"

"Alas! señor, that was the difficulty! So, as you perceive, I did not settle in Carmen."

"This is truly a sad termination to your story, for which I was quite unprepared, Señor Diego. But what are your present plans?"

"My intention, caballero, is to return to Valladolid, under the protection of the blessed Virgin and Saint Dominick!"

"It seems to me that you are taking a very round-about way of reaching that place, and that you are counting too much upon the assistance of Saint Dominick."

"Excuse me, señor, but from Peten, which we shall soon reach, I can get to Bacalar, and from Bacalar to Valladolid. This information I received from a muleteer at Iturbide, who has often made the journey."

"It is well. But it seems to me that you have chosen the longest road."

"I have chosen the surest, caballero; besides, I am not pressed for time!"

This observation ended our conversation. I wished our adventurer good night, and sleep surprised me in the midst of the various impressions produced by this recital.

The forests through which we had been travelling for several days are not as magnificent as those of the low, damp plains of Tabasco, yet they are invested with a degree of grandeur unknown in our latitudes. From the earliest ages of the world, their growth and development has been unrestricted. Successive forests have flourished, fallen, and decayed, fertilizing the soil and affording nourishment to newer and more magnificent growths. Here this continual transfor-

mation, this perpetual circle, where life springs from death, greatly impresses and astonishes the traveller, just as if it were not everywhere the great law of nature! Sometimes the colossal tree trunk, the dimensions of which surprises him, is only a mere shell, utterly decayed at heart, which myriads of insects are silently gnawing away, and which a drop of water might dissolve in dust. I have myself frequently heard, after a heavy and sudden shower, the crumbling down of old trees, the noise of whose fall alone disturbed the religious quiet of the woods. Ferns, the various kinds of *piperaceæ*, and the *arum*, favored by the air and light, are nourished by the *debris* of the fallen monarchs, while new trees soon spring up, filling the gap occasioned by their decay.

Although the ground is generally dry and rocky between Tabasco and Peten, trees of gigantic proportions are nevertheless to be found there. The eye measures with astonishment their vast circumference and prodigious altitude. Several of these colossi attracted our attention by their remarkable conformation at the base. At two or three yards from the ground the trunk throws out a horizontal welt, in the form of a band, which encircles the trunk and serves to consolidate and give it strength. The vines are still more curious. Now coiling along the ground like cables, now suspended in festoons, these plants twine, twist, and even knot themselves around the trees, reaching to their very tops, where they blossom and produce their fruit Sometimes they bend back to the earth to take new root. There are some which have the appearance of being artistically planted; while others, like the *bauhinia*, display alternately, on their compressed stalks, concave and convex inflections of the most peculiar appearance. But nothing is more surprising than to see the vines in some instances reaching to the tops of the highest trees but unattached to their trunks, and appearing like ropes suspended from their branches. It is difficult at first to conceive how the flexile

stem could have reached its present position without intermediate supports; but by observing the evolutions of the young plant, it will be seen that it attaches itself to the tree trunk by the aid of ærial roots running all along its stem. It only increases in length during this period of its existence. As soon as it reaches a point where it obtains sufficient air and light, it becomes strong and broad, ramifies, and interlaces itself in the neighboring branches. The radiating fibres which assisted it in its ascent wither and drop off, leaving it suspended from the top. In places great groups of palm trees occupy the ground. Here their tall trunks are crowned with broad and feathery leaves; yonder the branches are still laced up in the undeveloped stipe, while in another place they are spread out in graceful, fan-like forms against the blue sky, while a flood of light streams down among them, giving the scene an aspect of life and cheerfulness elsewhere unknown. For, notwithstanding the admiration inspired by the general luxuriance of the vegetation in these solitudes, the great trees and clustering vines, and the thousand forms of rank vegetable life, after all, leave a sad and unsatisfied impression on the mind. They awaken none of those sympathies which are excited by familiar and useful objects, fashioned by human hands, which contribute towards satisfying our wants, are associated with our existence, and which celebrate, in perpetual concert, our supremacy in creation.

Here man is only an accident; the part he is required to play is so insignificant, that he seems hardly requisite to the general harmony of the world. I was greatly impressed by this idea, in pursuing my way through these old forests where we struggled like so many pigmies against constantly recurring obstacles. It appeared as if the enigma of human existence presented itself to my mind for the first time. Nothing around me harmonized with the ideas implanted by education and developed by pride. For how many centuries, thought I,

have these forests given shade and vegetation, without at all profiting those beings who arrogate to themselves the dominion of the world? Had man never existed, the same phenomena would have occurred in their order as we observe them to-day! Besides, what an infinitude of creatures share with him this domain, subsisting frequently at his expense, and over which the imperfection of his powers prevents him from exercising the least control! Can we longer flatter our pride with the belief that the world was only made for us, and that all creation is subordinate to our convenience? That the insect which stings us, that the plant which poisons us, were called into existence for our benefit? That the myriads of stars which stud the firmament were placed there to embellish our nights? Must we believe in the exclusive importance of our globe, which is a mere atom in space, or does each part of creation fulfil an independent destiny, and move in its own sphere towards its legitimate end, the mystery of which is hidden from our eyes?

These ideas and impressions are doubtless far from new, but they are such as fill the mind of the wayfarer in these trackless wilds, while a deep feeling of humiliation comes over him with the consciousness of his own weakness and insignificance. The ancient ascetics, who sought to extinguish the pride and vain glory of their spirits, did well to seclude themselves in the forests and among mountains, away from the crowded city and the haunts of men.

Among the various flowers which lined our path, we occasionally observed the gigantic *aristolochia grandiflora*, often not far from twelve to fifteen inches in diameter. Before its development, the calyx resembles the figure of a swan suspended by its bill, but when it is full blown it assumes the form of the conventional cap of liberty, turned up with a violet velvet lining. Its great size, sombre color, and above all its rank and virulent odor, which generally deters the travel-

ler from touching it, have led the Spaniards, who are never at a loss for a nickname, whether for man or for natural objects, to call it *montera del demonio*, the devil's cap.

In traversing these forests, I found that I had conceived very false notions of them, for I was soon convinced that a traveller losing his way here, would have as few resources against starvation as in the forests of the old world.

The *sapote*, the *mamey*, and a third variety with a pit called *limoncillo*, were the only kinds of fruits which we saw; besides, as vegetation is never suspended, the trees produce constantly both leaves and branches, to the exclusion of flowers and fruits. The naturalist, on the other hand, finds here an abundant harvest, particularly among articulated animals. In the month of May, when the first rains occur, the verdure is alive with the exotic coleopteras so much admired in our collections. The *longicornes*, among others, are so numerous and of such great variety, that, without dismounting, I collected thirty-three different species, many of which were extremely beautiful. Unfortunately, these fragile treasures became spoiled by damp during my illness at Peten, and the opportunity to make a second collection was never afforded me. During this season also, which is the time for mating, the larger varieties of gallineæ perched on the tree tops, make the woods vocal with their cries, and fall an easy prey to the hunter. The handsomest bird of this family is a species of *meleagris* called by the Spaniards *pavo del monte*. Its plumage is of dark green, shading on a metallic purple. Its tail feathers are tipped with blue and are copper colored around their edges. Its head is crowned with a crest, the scarlet color of which contrasts charmingly with the light blue shade of its neck. I saw this bird domesticated at the corregidor's in Peten, who intended it as a gift to the President of the republic, as a fine specimen of the ornithology of the country.

On the seventh day of our journey from Tenosique we en-

camped on the banks of the *Yalchilan*, a small tributary of the San Pedro which constitutes the boundary line between Tabasco and Guatemala, the nearest villages of which are separated by upwards of eighty leagues of wilderness. The drought had been excessive and the stream had dried up, so that we were obliged to ascend its bed for more than a league to procure water, at a point where a quantity was still retained in pools among the rocks. During the rainy season, this stream becomes a furious torrent, obstructing passage for days and weeks together. Those who pass it then must do so on or take rafts, the risk of swimming across with their mules.

From *Yalchilan*, which is reputed to be just midway between Tenosique and Peten, our road seemed to improve, but we suffered much in other respects, principally from lack of water. The night of our eighth day was spent at a spot of evil fame, called, not inappropriately, Dolores. The soil is here open and cavernous, and water is never retained on the surface. As a consequence both men and animals often suffer cruelly from thirst. By tapping on the ground here and there, our *arrieros* at last found a little subterranean reservoir, from which they obtained a calabash full of muddy water, which we divided scrupulously. The poor animals were obliged to go without. Only a month previously, a lone woman and her two children, in returning to Peten from Tenosique, after the death of her husband at the latter place, barely escaped perishing at this deserted spot. Her timely discovery of certain vines (the *cissus cordifolia* and the *hydrophana* among the number) with which she had been familiar as a child, alone saved her. Their profuse sap supplied the absence of water.

But if we had difficulty in procuring a supply of water at night, we were relieved from further difficulty on that score before morning; for at midnight we were thoroughly drenched by a thunder storm—the first of the season in this locality.

The next day furthermore, brought us to a great lake—a lonely, dismal sheet of water, which communicates, it is said, with the Rio San Pedro. Beyond its further shore, in the direction of Yucatan, was visible a chain of moderately high mountains, running from east to west, which do not appear to be indicated in any maps, ancient or modern.

On our eleventh day, a little after noon, the aspect of the forest began to change. The tall trees grew less closely together, the sky was often visible between their tops, the air circulated more freely, and thickets of bright green, formed for the most part by bamboo trees, alternated with the undergrowth, which was here less dense. All these announced a speedy change. The *arrieros* commenced singing for the first time since our departure from Tenosique; the mules pricked up their ears and snuffed the air; and Diego, sharing the general animation, ran from one to the other, encouraging them by voice and gesture.

"Señor Diego," I cried, "you do not sufficiently economize your strength; we have to pass three leagues of savannas after leaving the forest, before we can encamp."

"Do not be uneasy," he replied gaily, "we shall halt on the edge of the woods to rest the animals and to escape the heat of the day."

We did stop, truly enough, not far from a swamp, from which in spite of my representations and the advice of the guides, Diego drank immoderately. At last we left behind us the last tree and bush, and emerged in an open plain. Our eyes wandered at will over the clear savanna where only a few hills peeped out, and over an azure sky which, after ten days of cramped vision, seemed limitless. For my part I realized an entirely new kind of enjoyment, which I can only compare to that felt by the navigator when he discovers an unknown land. Three hours after this, we reached the first village of Peten, which bears the name of *Sacluc*. On arriving here,

we all experienced a feeling of profound satisfaction and relief. Every one rejoiced that his task was done, and that he was at last in an inhabited country. Diego alone appeared to be insensible to the amelioration of our condition. Enveloped in an old coverlid, and lying upon the baggage, with a pack-saddle for a pillow, he did not display his usual gaiety and activity. Uneasy at this change, I approached and questioned him. His head ached, he said, and he complained of extreme lassitude, and seemed desirous to sleep. During the night he had fever, accompanied with vomiting. I gave him a dose of ipecac, which somewhat relieved him; but, as he was too ill to accompany us further, I left him with some money and medicines, in charge of our youngest muleteer; besides this I sent Morin to inform the alcalde of the village of his condition, in order that he might receive all necessary care.

It is impossible, in the midst of the thick woods with which the country is covered uninterruptedly from Tenosique, to form a clear idea of the configuration of the region and of the direction of the mountains which interrupt the road to Peten. The declivities which we ascended seem to fall off in a north-westerly direction, and to subside gradually towards the confines of Yucatan. On coming out of the forest, these chains of *sierras* seemed to have disappeared. Only an infinite number of hills were visible, generally isolated, of conical shape, and rising suddenly, as in the Island of Pines, from a smooth, uniform plane. These eminences are frequently wooded, and appearing in every direction for many leagues, seem to form a circle around the horizon.

We, nevertheless, came to other forests before reaching the end of our journey. But they alternated with savannas, and were traversed by a broad, well-beaten path. They were rather groves than forests, peopled with birds, enamelled with flowers, and perfumed with the most delightful odors. The perfume of the vanilla predominated, given out by the beans which fall

when ripe, and decay at the foot of the stalk which supported them. The Spaniards are not particularly partial to the odor of this plant; they prefer that of the *myrtus pimienta*, the aromatic flavor of which much resembles that of cinnamon. At last even these clumps of forest disappeared, and we found ourselves on the banks of a blue lake, the surface of which was as smooth as a mirror, in which a small stony island, gilded by the last rays of the setting sun, rose gently at a distance of five hundred yards from the shore. On it were a number of small houses clustering together from the water's edge to its summit, which was crowned by a church and a grove of cocoa trees. We had no difficulty in recognizing the lake before us as the mysterious Itza or Peten of geographers, and the island as that described by Cortez as the stronghold of the warlike Itzacs. The little town which had supplanted the Indian city, was that of Flores, the capital of the district, and the point to which I had directed my weary journey all the way across the Atlantic, through the swamps of Campeachy and the wildernesses of Tabasco!

We arrived none too soon. The energy which had hitherto sustained me was nearly exhausted. My wound, furthermore, was inflamed by exercise and continual chafing, and threatened to run into gangrene. I was carried into a boat, and five minutes afterwards, supported by Morin, I landed in the midst of an inquisitive population, which had been attracted to the beach by the novelty of an arrival. As for poor Diego, whom we had left at the village of Sacluc, I learned afterwards that he died there like a Christian. I heartily regretted the loss of the companion of my adventures, whose original character and joyous spirit had so much enlivened the tedium of my journey.

THE ISLAND OF PETEN AND TOWN OF FLORES.

VI.

PETEN.

The Itzaes of Peten—An historical episode—Visit of Cortez—Reduction of the Itzaes—Destruction of the aboriginal temples and idols—Change of name—Illness—Good-natured officials—Medical experiences—The pedagogue of Flores—A school of practical natural history—Grand hunt for beasts and birds—Discovery of a new variety of the crocodile—A night adventure with the reptile—Convalescence—Picturesque views—The island of Peten—Town of Flores—Houses of the inhabitants—Lack of commerce—General poverty—Arcadian simplicity—The evening *tertulia*—Costume—Music—A formal ball—A model padre—The *Marimba*—Specimens of native music—The seclusion of Flores—Origin of its name—Hospitality—Death of a stranger—Voyage on the lake—Beautiful shores—A sugar mill or *trapeche*—Indian towns and their inhabitants—Extent of the lake—Its aboriginal name—Fishes—Cave of Jobitsinal—Topography of the district—Its political relations—Soil and productions—Ancient prosperity—Communications with Yucatan, etc.—Geographical ignorance—Belize—Utter isolation of the country—Navigable rivers—Climate—Maladies—General ignorance—Food—Population—Wild beasts—Deer—Tapirs—Rabbits—*Geomys mexicans*—Birds—Reptiles—Fishes again—Freaks of nature under the tropics—Insects—The *nigua*—Antiquities—Lake Yax-Haa—Ruins on its islands—Terra-cottas—Mythical cities—Preparations for departure.

THE ancient chronicles of Yucatan inform us, that about the year 1420, the feudal monarchy which had long existed on this peninsula was destroyed, and that Mayapan, the capital of the state, was razed to the ground before a coalition of rebel caziques. After this revolution, of which we have very confused accounts, the *canek** of the Itzaes, one of the principal chiefs, migrated with his tribe to the southward, and after wandering for many years in the wilderness, finally reached the shores of the lake now called Peten or Itza. Charmed with the beauty of the spot, and still more with the security offered by its islands, he settled with his followers on the most important island, whence comes the name of *Peten-*

* *El rey canek*, says Cogulludo; but the worthy Franciscan mistook for a proper name, a title which has the same significance as *cazique*.

Itza (island of the Itzaes,) a denomination which was soon extended over the whole country. The colony became so prosperous, that at the time of its invasion two hundred and seventy-seven years later, the islands contained a population of 25,000 souls, without mentioning the inhabitants of numerous villages which flourished on the main land.*

It may be asked how it happened that the Spaniards, whose warlike spirit and ardent fanaticism never wearied of conquest or the salvation of souls, permitted the Indians of Peten to live for a century and a half under the shadow of their own nationality? The poverty of the country in precious metals explains their magnanimity, which, however, did not endure, for about the year 1618, the Franciscans paved the way for their conquest by sending to the Lake of Itza certain daring missionaries, who, almost as a matter of course, suffered martyrdom for their pains.†

A curious instance of the simplicity of the Indians merits mention here. On visiting the temples erected on the principal islands, the monks were surprised to find the image of a horse, in stone and mortar, tolerably well executed. They learned respecting this idol that when Cortez traversed these regions in his march against Honduras, he left here a wounded horse which could go no further. The inhabitants to whose care he confided the animal, promised that it should receive every attention, and they conscientiously kept their word. Ordinary grass, they conceived, would be too coarse fare for a guest so distinguished; so they spread flowers and fowls before him, as they did before their own invalids of high position. The result of this kind treatment was the starvation of the poor animal, whose death spread consternation among the peo-

* Villagutierre, who gives us these details, has doubtless exaggerated the population of the islands

† See the account of their adventures in Villagutierre, *Historia de la Conquesta de la Provincia de Itza*, l. ii., c. 2, 3.

ple. They held a grand consultation, and it was unanimously decided that some eminent mark of their regard and regret must be accorded to the defunct quadruped. The most skillful sculptors among them received orders to reproduce its figure. Under the name of *Tziminchak*, it was elevated to the dignity of a god. Historians are silent touching the etymology of this glorious designation; they only inform us that the new divinity, by some strange attribution, presided over storms and directed the thunder.*

The Council of the Indies, wearied with the complaints made against the Lacandones and Itzaes, whose reiterated incursions annoyed the people of Yucatan, decided upon the reduction of their country. A royal order was issued that this should be peacefully done. The tribes were to be brought over by moral suasion, and not to be reduced by violence. Their subjection was assigned to missionaries, and the sole duty of the soldiers who were sent with them, was defined to be to protect the holy men on their errand. But, as might have been foreseen, this peaceful combination was not of long duration.

Another provision was, that Yucatan and Guatemala should act in concert in conducting the enterprise. It was Yucatan, however, which commenced hostilities. In the year 1662 fifty Spaniards left Merida, under command of Captain Mirones, and with great difficulty succeeded in reaching Zaclun (*Sacluc?*). While encamped there, awaiting reinforcements, for-

* The name *Tzminchak* is derived from *tzimin*, the tapir or *dante*, and *chak*, white; *i. e.*, the *white tapir*. The tapir is the largest indigenous animal of Yucatan, and the only one with which the Itzaes could compare the horses of the conquerors. The tapir was, moreover, a sacred animal among all the Central American nations. Cortez's horse was probably white; and as he was brought among the Indians by people who had fire-arms, it is not surprising that the new god was in some way connected in their minds with the phenomena of thunder and lightning, themselves the concomitants of storm.—T.

getful of the peaceful character of their mission, they committed some act of violence, whereupon the Indians overwhelmed them and massacred the entire detachment. The missionary who accompanied this party met with a still more terrible fate; arrested on the banks of the lake, and transported to the island, he was immolated with all the circumstances and ferocity connected with aboriginal sacrifices.

The efforts of Guatemala were scarcely more successful. Its forces encountered all kinds of difficulties, and being met by the open hostility of the Indians, two successive expeditions made in 1695 and 1696 were both driven out of the country. Captain Dias de Velasco, who commanded a detachment of pioneers, was the only officer who succeeded in reaching the banks of the mysterious lake. But this act of temerity cost him his life and the lives of all his soldiers. It was about this period, and on the heel of these misfortunes, that a gentleman of Merida conceived a project of definitively establishing the Spanish dominion in the obstinate district. He desired to obtain the governorship of Yucatan, and was ambitious to bring himself into notice in some marked manner. In the hope of inducing the Council of the Indies to concur in his views, he offered, at his own expense, to open a road through Peten to Guatemala. According to his ideas, this was the best means of reducing to subjection the hostile tribes situated between the two countries. His plan having received the approval of the royal Council, orders were issued to facilitate its execution. The governor of Guatemala was to give his aid to the enterprise by directing a body of soldiers against Peten from the south. The bishop of Merida was to lend his assistance by stimulating the zeal of his clergy, while the viceroy of New Spain was to furnish, at the cheapest rates, the provisions and ammunition necessary for the undertaking. And finally Don Martin de Ursua was himself elevated to the post which he had so long coveted.

As soon as the new governor had obtained his commission, the work was begun. Two years were consumed in constructing a practicable road in the direction of Peten from Yucatan. Meantime negotiations were carried on with the Indians, but with no result; they would concede nothing. On the 24th January, 1697, his plans being ripe, Ursua left Campeachy at the head of a small army, a portion of which was sent on ahead, with orders to encamp on the banks of the lake, and while there to construct a raft for the passage of his main body to the island strongholds. About the 1st of March this detachment was joined by the principal force under Ursua in person. The Spaniards, who for more than a month had been encompassed by forests, were delighted at the sight of the water, the islands covered with *teocallis*, the façades of which glistened like silver in the sun, the culture of the banks—in a word, with the life animating these mysterious and isolated shores. At this period of its history, if the annals of the chroniclers are to be credited, the country presented a much more attractive appearance than now. It would be out of place here to dwell upon the causes which led to its transformation; it would but increase the size of my book, without interesting my readers; I shall limit myself therefore to a summary of the conquest.

The preliminary attempts at conciliation having failed, the Spanish general made preparations for an assault. The artillery was ranged along the shore, and the *goleta* was made ready for sailing. On the 13th of March, at sunrise, Ursua went on board in person with half of his force, consisting of a hundred and eight combatants, and sailed straight for the principal island. The lake was as deserted as the shore; not a boat, not even an enemy was visible. Suddenly, in the midst of the general silence and suspense, Don Juan Pacheco, an apostolical vicar, standing upon the prow of the vessel, thus addressed the soldiers in a loud voice: "Caballeros! let those

who feel sincere regret for their sins, and desire to ask God's pardon, raise their right hands and say, 'Lord, I have erred, but have pity upon me!'" All having obeyed (as it would appear), the vicar gave them absolution, after which they cheerfully continued on their course.*

They had almost reached their place of destination, when a flotilla of canoes, concealed by an indentation of the shore, advanced suddenly upon them. A shower of arrows was discharged in their midst, while every part of the island swarmed with warriors, shouting in the most savage manner. The Spaniards nevertheless landed, and opened fire on the thronging masses of Indians. Then followed what always happened in these unequal contests. The Itzaes, terrified by the sound of the artillery and appalled by its murderous effects, lost courage, threw down their arms, abandoned their island, and plunged into the lake in such numbers, that, according to history, they fairly covered the surface of the water.

The Spaniards took possession of the island in the name of the crown, planted the royal standard on its highest point, and then rendered thanks to God for their victory. Immediately afterwards, animated by a holy zeal, they entered the temples and private sanctuaries, where they employed themselves in destroying and mutilating the idols, from seven in the morning until six in the afternoon. Neither officers nor men allowed themselves a moment's repose. They changed the name of the island, in conformity with the laws of the conquest, from *Tayasal*, the Indian designation, to that of *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios y San Pablo;* but its ancient appellation is preserved, although the two are sometimes associated in the abridged form of *Remedios-Peten.* A military post (*presidio*) was founded here, designed as a protection for the future colony against the return of its original occupants.

These historical reminiscences furnished food for my mind

* Villagutierre l viii., c. 8, p. 475.

during the first few days of the long illness which detained me at Flores. My imagination was so greatly excited by them, that the remembrance of the old Romans could scarcely have absorbed me more on the classic plains of Latium. I promised myself, on my recovery, the pleasure of searching for such aboriginal relics as might have escaped the observation of the soldiers of Ursua, and determined to visit the more distant islands in the lake, which would perhaps open a better field for discovery. But at last I grew weary of the same train of thought, until my only diversion lay in the variety of my ailments. The desire of recovery speedily induced me to adopt a severe regimen—diet and repose. With my eyes turned towards the lake, of which I could catch a glimpse from my window, I felt my pulse twenty times a day, wondering if I were not sufficiently restored to proceed with my researches! Alternating between hope and fear, I had no resource against *ennui* except the dreams of my imagination, the delights of my remembrances, and the attentive observation of the symptoms of my illness.

The corregidor of the district was a most cheerful personage, slightly corpulent, as a corregidor should be, but not so much as to detract from the dignity of his appearance. Active, generous, a good talker withal, and a little ceremonious, like all Spaniards of the old school, he manifested great sympathy and kindness for me. His local pride was flattered by my visit to Flores; and he was pleased to think that I was about to make his country famous. My critical situation appealed not only to his sympathy, therefore, but also to his patriotism. What a misfortune, if my life should not be spared! Peten, about to be glorified, would again fall back into obscurity! Brought up in Yucatan, where his youth had been spent, and possessed of much information regarding it, the good corregidor entertained the greatest curiosity touching the old world. We consequently made an exchange of informa-

tion, and in his society I passed the happiest moments which I spent in the country. One day, when I was more despondent than usual, he entered my room quite radiant with joy. "Well, señor," he inquired, rubbing his hands, "how is your precious health?" "I seem to be getting worse and worse, Señor Corregidor," I answered sadly, "and I fear little short of a miracle will ever enable me to leave your island." "But," he cried, as if struck with a brilliant idea, "it would be a signal honor for my country to be the guardian of your tomb; nevertheless," he added, after a long pause, "I cannot conscientiously say that I desire it should be so!"

Besides this functionary, the alcalde, an innocent old man, as dried up and thin as his superior was stout and unctuous, came regularly to see me. He wore, according to the custom of the country, where old and young dress alike, a short white linen vest, which only reached half way down his back, and very tight pantaloons of the same material. When the two functionaries of the village were together, and both apparelled in this primitive style, they formed an amusing contrast, even to the eyes of an invalid. The alcalde constantly urged me to use a tea made of plantains, which he assured me was a remedy against all diseases, for the efficacy of which he could vouch. One day I showed him my medicine chest, and explained the nature and properties of the drugs which it contained. "Ah, señor," cried he, confounded by my scientific knowledge, and the nominal virtue of my medicines, "you carry health with you! Can you then really be ill?"

The discovery of my medical treasures soon became the great event of the island, and every invalid in it hastened to my door for treatment. Even those in good health began suddenly to feel suspicious symptoms, and were anxious to profit by this opportunity to test the virtue of my specifics. The task of prescribing for all was greater than my strength could bear, and after having administered (somewhat at random, I must

confess) to the most urgent cases, I closed my doors upon the others until the period of my own recovery. I had become tolerably intimate with the schoolmaster, a man of few resources and limited learning, but whom I succeeded in rendering extremely useful. When my plan was well formed, I communicated it to him; it was that during the hours of recreation he should permit his scholars to go out into the woods, and gather for me a collection of birds and insects. The master was easily persuaded, and even seemed to feel, himself, some interest in natural history, particularly when I promised to reward his zeal with money. It was a brilliant device of mine, for from that time forward the children brought me numbers of birds from the nest, lizards caught in traps, serpents, insects—in a word, all living things within their reach were heaped up around me. The island was thus relieved of numberless destructive and troublesome animals and insects, and science proportionately advanced. So delighted were the parents with the little profits accruing to their children from this new branch of business, that they sent them to scour the woods instead of sending them to school. The master complained, but it was too late; he himself had given the impulsion, and it had now become too strong for his control. The men, also, soon began to appreciate the advantages of this new occupation, and emulated one another in pursuing it. Even the women brought me the produce of their poultry yards, and encumbered my dwelling with their indiscriminate contributions. During my sojourn, therefore, there was certainly one branch of industry which flourished; the first probably ever successfully introduced in Flores. After this I did not want for occupation; *ennui* was driven from my hut; but the fatigue incident to the study and preparation of so many different objects retarded my restoration to health, and delayed my convalescence.

One morning a crocodile was brought to me alive; it was

three yards in length, and had been captured in the lake. The fishermen had caught it with a hook baited with the heart of a bullock. I had it fastened, by the line with which it had been caught, at a reasonable and safe distance from my hammock. During the day it gave great signs of irritation, springing forward suddenly to the full extent of the cord which confined it, then sinking back with its jaws wide open in a state of perfect quiet. Towards evening I administered to him a strong dose of arsenical soap and hoped to find him dead in the morning, when I proposed to prepare him skilfully so as to prevent decomposition, which takes place rapidly under the tropics. The agonies occasioned by the poison I had administered redoubled his fury; writhing in all directions, and giving out strangely agonizing sounds, for a long time he prevented us from sleeping. Morin, however, finally dozed off, and after awhile I succeeded in following his example, but my sleep was early interrupted by a strange, hoarse noise close to my bed, accompanied by a suffocating, musky odor. I started up in my hammock, and hastily struck a match, by the dim and fitful light of which I discovered that the horrible reptile had broken from his fastenings and had taken up a position directly under my hammock.

By a sudden and desperate effort, for I was still feeble, I managed to clamber up to the cross beams of the house, from which my hammock was suspended, whence I shouted vigorously to Morin. As usual, he slept soundly, and was not a little startled on hearing a voice from aloft. During the day I had been despondent, and had talked of death, and he had gone to sleep full of the gloomiest forebodings. His first impression on waking therefore, was, that he heard the call of a departed spirit on its way to the clouds. But I soon convinced him of my actual existence, and that I was only temporarily sojourning on high. Reassured, he leaped up, and seizing a

hatchet, which was close at hand, moved resolutely across the room, and opened the solitary window of our apartment, admitting a faint flush of light, by the aid of which we ascertained the position of our unhappy monster. He was entirely motionless, except when now and then he opened his bronzed jaws, and gave out a cry of agony. My position was by no means a comfortable one, and I felt greatly relieved when, after some difficulty, Morin succeeded in getting a noose around the neck of the expiring reptile, by means of which we suspended him to the cross-beam on which I was perched. He struggled but little for the poison had nearly done its work, and in an hour he was dead. I carried his skin to Paris, where it was stuffed, and he now figures in all his native ugliness in the museum of that city. He proved to be of a species before unknown, and the learned professors of natural history have done me the honor to name him *Crocodilus Moreleti.* As this was about the only reward that I received for carrying out an enterprise in which I largely exhausted my health, energy, and means, I hope that no one will envy me my good fortune, nor be disposed to ridicule the value of my recompense. As for the good people of Peten, who proved to be not without a spice of malice in their composition, they got hold of some of the details of our adventure, out of which they contrived a story in which Morin and myself played parts more grotesque than glorious. It was amusing, if not authentic, and treated the town to a laugh at our expense, in which we were too good natured not to join.

At the end of six weeks, I was able to leave my house and see something of the place in which I had been so long an impatient prisoner. I was impressed with the magnificence of the landscape which presented itself from the eminence where the modern church is situated, and which was once occupied by the ancient temples of the Itzaes. The sky was clear, the waters of the lake of the loveliest azure, and the islands and

bluff shores, indented with little bays, hemmed in by silvery belts of sand, were green and refreshing to the sight. And here I may mention that only a part of the lake can be seen from the island. A high promontory, jutting across it from the eastward, cuts it nearly in two. Nevertheless, the expanse of water is sufficiently great for every picturesque requirement of the prospect.

The island of Peten itself, is oval in shape, rising by a gentle slope from the water, and terminating in a platform of calcareous rocks. It is not large; one may make the circuit of it in a quarter of an hour. Its surface is covered with small stones, which are, doubtless, the remains of ancient edifices. The Itzaes were not without good reasons for establishing their temples on this rocky eminence, whence they could defy the asaults of their enemies. But it is difficult to conceive the motives which induced the Spaniards to locate their huts on the ruins of the Indian town, and to imprison themselves, in the face of such a lovely shore, in a circle so limited. Too near the main land to find in their isolation any great security, they are yet too far from it to enjoy its advantages. True, every one here understands the use of the oar; even the women are admirable rowers, according to Morin, whose testimony may be safely taken; but the enjoyment of the fields and the forests of the adjacent country hardly recompenses one for the risk of life which he must encounter in reaching them, by means of the unsteady little canoes which here afford the only means of navigation.

The town of Flores is very irregularly built. The houses, scattered here and there, nevertheless resolve themselves into two principal streets, one of which runs around the island, while the other, rising from the lake, extends across it and divides it in nearly two equal parts. The church and the municipal house, a tolerably large building, in which we were lodged, are built on the highest point on the island. The de-

scription which I might give of these two edifices could never make up to the reader for the loss of the twenty-one *adoratorios*, the sites of which they probably occupy, and of which not a trace now remains. As to the private dwellings, they are for the most part miserable structures, without any other opening than a door. The most pretentious and comfortable are plastered, but many of them, like the habitations of the Indians, are simple huts, thatched with palms. The rain frequently penetrates these roofs, the timber work of which is only held together by withes or vines. This portion of the buildings struck me as curiously irregular; there is no fixed rule for pitching the roof; all depends upon the inventive ability of the rustic architects, so that the same problem is frequently solved by twenty different combinations. The use of chimneys is as unknown as that of windows. A common aperture serves for the escape of smoke and the admission of light. I have little doubt that the Indian city, destroyed a century and a half ago, was much superior to the present town, although I am far from believing that it had the importance which has been ascribed to it by certain archæologists. A few fruit trees, such as the calabash and anona, and an occasional red jasmine plant, growing at random around these dwellings, throw here and there a furtive shade on the pallid and stony soil, which almost blinds the eyes with its glaring aridity.

In the streets of Flores there are neither shops nor artisans; there is no market even; every one depends on his own production, or on such exchanges as he may be able to make with his neighbors, for his food. If any one has need of money, he prepares some article of domestic consumption such as chocolate, bread, or candles, and sends his children about with them, from hut to hut, in search of a purchaser. At long intervals some enterprising man among them takes a cow or horse to Belize, and exchanges it there for a petty

package of English goods. Very little suffices for a population whose only ambition is to live without labor. European activity, which unceasingly applies itself to the accumulation of wealth, could not be comprehended by the inhabitants of Peten; but, on the other hand, they are ignorant of the infinite annoyances which follow on the laborious fermentation of the old world. No one here ever thinks of speculation as a means of acquiring wealth. Destitute of ambition, and without strong passion of any kind, the certainty of a sufficiency for bare existence is all they require to make them happy; and this certainly is assured to them by the extent and the fertility of the lands by which they are surrounded. Possession is the only title to the soil which they recognize. Any one who clears a piece of ground, makes use of it as long as he pleases, and if any dispute arises as to its ownership, it is soon settled by the paternal authority of the corregidor. The remoteness of any market for the sale of produce, and the difficulties of transportation, somewhat justify the indolence of the people, and in some degree explain the absence of all commerce. What interest, so they reason among to themselves, can we have in producing more than is required for our home consumption? True, they fall into the most abject state of destitution, when the season is so bad as to interfere with their harvest. This fact was forcibly illustrated during my stay in Flores. A fanega or load of maize, (about one hundred pounds,) worth from two to three shillings, rose to three dollars in the town; while at twenty-five leagues distance, its cost was less than one dollar, and it was to be had, a little farther on, for one-twelfth of that sum!

After what I have said, it is superfluous to add that the district is very poor in respect of accumulated wealth. Its richest inhabitant would find difficulty in realizing five thousand dollars. However, there is this advantage in Flores, that instead of one's ears being deafened by the discordant

sounds of the hammer and the sugar mill, they are filled constantly with the harmony of musical instruments. As soon as the sun goes down and the evening breeze sets in, the town is full of sounds of mirth and hilarity, which continue until the night is far advanced. And thus life ebbs away in the midst of perfect quiet, and in utter indifference as to what the future may bring forth. The desire for novelty, improvement, or change never enters into the thoughts of the inhabitants. Every one having received the same amount of education, and enjoying in an equal degree the privilege of doing nothing, the most perfect equality exists in society, which is not troubled by the pretensions of its members on the score of birth, learning, or fortune.

Few days pass consecutively in Flores without the sound of the *marimba* inviting its inhabitants to some new festivity. No other form of invitation is extended. The door is open for all. The spectators assemble in groups around the entrance, looking on with democratic freedom, and making their comments aloud. There you see the alcalde or the corregidor alternating in the same *fandango* with the meanest citizen. The mother succeeds the daughter, the negress the white woman; rank, age, caste—all the conditions which elsewhere separate society—seem to be confounded here. Persons giving parties do the honors of the house in the most unpretentious manner possible; a dozen candles, a supply of chairs collected from a dozen neighboring houses, a few homely refreshments, and the engagement of one or two performers on the *marimba*, constitute the entire preparations. Our notions of delicacy occasionally receive something of a shock from certain customs here, which, to say the least, are of an extremely primitive character. The same glass, for instance, circulates among the guests until drained, while a spoon alternates from hand to hand, with the same jar of sweetmeats. Nor do the ladies, after the fatigues of dancing, hesitate to

recuperate their energies through the aid of a glass of rum, at the same time lighting a cigar of size and strength sufficient to turn the stomach of our hardiest smokers.

A word for the ladies who may feel an interest in foreign fashions. I need not say that corsets have not yet found their way here, and it can well be believed that generally the style of dress is of that free and open character which best conforms with the conditions of the climate. A chemise of thin linen or cotton cloth, fringed around the arms and neck with coarse lace or domestic embroidery, and a simple muslin skirt of varying color, constitute the principal articles in the wardrobes of the ladies of Flores. Their hair, almost always luxuriant and beautiful, plaited in long braids, which are fastened at their ends with gay ribands, is allowed to fall over the shoulders or down the back. A large comb, glittering like a crescent on the top of the head, and a necklace of pearls or little golden coins, complete the adornments of these dusky daughters of the *Laguna*. Less fastidious than their sisters of Havana, they do not disdain to wear the same dress as often as occasion requires; for if they were to make a change with every new festivity, the supply of Belize would soon be exhausted.

Occasionally, during the progress of the evening festivities or *tertulias*, the *marimba* is allowed a little repose, and then the women take up the melody in the way of lovely little songs, which they sing, without the least timidity, to their own accompaniment on the guitar. The men gradually join in, and the concert becomes general. The effect is always exhilarating, and when the chorus is at its height, it stops suddenly, the *marimbas* strike up, and the *fandango* commences in earnest, the spectators meantime keeping time with both hands and feet. The dance, however formal it may seem when it begins, soon becomes passionate and intoxicating to the soul and the senses. It is often scenic, like the ballets so popular with us, and contains a little pantomimic love story

—the old story, coquetry, jealousy, and the final surrender of the wayward maiden. Each dancer works out the story according to his own taste and temperament, from the reserve of a timid and respectful affection through all intermediate stages, up to the excitements of a rapturous passion.

The first gathering of this kind which I attended was honored with the name of *baile*, or ball, and was given by the municipality in celebration of some national victory, of whom and over whom I never could clearly learn, the news of which had reached us, I will not venture to say how many months after the event. The *élite* of the town and the surrounding country were present on this occasion. When the corregidor and myself entered, it was evident that something more than usual was taking place. Every eye was fixed on a young man singing to his own accompaniment on a guitar. He was not wanting in taste, and certainly not in assurance. The relatively elegant cut of his garments, his easy air of gallantry with the women, all pronounced him to be a stranger. A burst of applause succeeded his song, after which, making a sign to the musicians, he offered his hand to one of the ladies, and led off a fandango with such ease, grace, and agility as to excite the utmost enthusiasm of the spectators. Frantic bravos echoed from every corner of the apartment. The gentleman smiled his thanks, wiped his face carelessly with an embroidered handkerchief, and then seated himself among the señoras, who seemed enraptured with his grace of person and elegance of manner. "Who is this extraordinary personage?" I inquired, turning to my neighbor. "He is a *cura* from Honduras," was the reply.

To me the accomplishments of the *padrecito* (as he was affectionately called) were scarcely less anomalous and extraordinary than his manners and general bearing; but I concealed my surprise. I cannot better illustrate the state of society and morals in these countries than by saying, that no

one saw the least impropriety in having as their minister and confessor in religion, a man who was the gayest dancer and the most gallant in manner of the entire community. "Ah!" exclaimed the corregidor as we sauntered home, "is n't the *padrecito* an elegant fellow? He has taught our young folks many a lesson in good breeding, by which they cannot fail to profit. But I presume, señor, that your padres are by far his superiors?" I was tempted to tell him how his *padrecito* would probably be treated in Europe, but thought better of it, and left the corregidor to his delusions.

It is time that I should describe the *marimba*, to which I have already so often alluded. Although entirely constructed of wood, it is capable of very harmonious effects. It consists of a series of vertical tubes, of varying sizes and lengths, graduated like those of the *sirinx* or Pan's pipe, and open at their superior extremities. Their bases are rounded, with a little lateral opening, covered with a thin membrane of some animal, or what is called gold-beater's skin. Over each tube, supported on tense cords at their extremities, are little bars of hard and sonorous wood. The music is produced by rapidly striking on these bars with little elastic strips of cane or whalebone, pointed with a ball of India rubber. Neither nail nor peg is used in fashioning any of these instruments; all their parts are held together by cords. These *marimbas* are of different sizes; that most in use has twenty-two tubes, forming three complete octaves without the semi-tones. The wood used, for the little resonant bars to which I have alluded, is called by the natives *chactecoc;* that used for the tubes, the red or fragrant cedar.

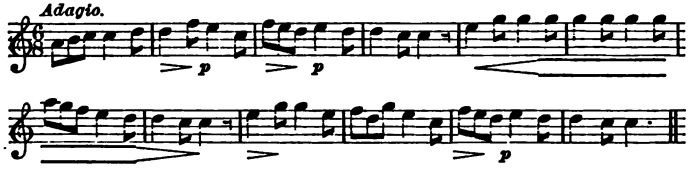
I saw in Flores another stringed instrument, rather barbarous, which is common among the Lacandones. It is a kind of mandoline, in the shape of a truncated cone. It is far from being musical, and is chiefly remarkable from the circumstance that it has but one cord, which passes four times over the bridge.

The *marimba* is also of Indian origin, but I think the credit of its discovery is due rather to Vera Paz than to Yucatan, where it is unknown at this day. As already intimated, it is played with both hands like the piano, and I have no doubt could be greatly improved on by our manufacturers, (who are so emulous in devising new instruments of music), with advantage to themselves and amusement and pleasure to the public. Certain it is, that without the *marimba* there would be but little gaiety in Flores. It has the first place in the serenade; it is the organ in the church, the orchestra in the *tertulia*, and the solace of the traveller in his journeys, and I must confess, is vastly superior in clearness and sonorous melody to that precussive instrument, of the piano. It has developed a very general and correct musical taste among the people of Peten. Not only do they play the national airs on it with much skill and feeling, but they have composed a great number of local melodies which have a considerable degree of merit, and on which they are able to make many exquisite variations. In fact, during the whole of my journey in these parts of America, I nowhere heard the choruses so well executed as at Flores. It was a principal solace of my long confinement, that of listening, during the quiet hours of the evening, to the harmonies which were wafted up from the banks of the lake, to the elevated spot where my house was situated. Closing my eyes, with the soft evening breeze falling like down on my forehead, I could almost fancy that I was in fairy land, and heard the voices of Titana and her ærial train.

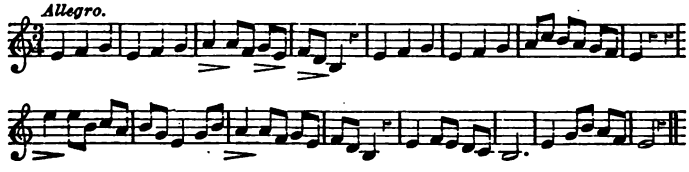
I wrote out some of these airs which happened to impress themselves on my memory, and give them here, for the satisfaction of those who may be curious about the musical capabilities of this remote little spot, buried in the heart of Central America, and away from all the suggestions of European art. Even such details as these assist us in forming a proper estimate of humanity and its tendencies and moral expressions in

various parts of the globe, and under various or exceptional circumstances. It will be observed that the airs of Peten are less plaintive than those of Spanish origin. The Indians, I may observe, have some national airs, dating doubtless beyond the Conquest, but they do not like to sing them before strangers. I have written out the only one which I was able to obtain, and which seems to be peculiar to the mountaineers of Vera Paz. Tradition assigns it a date far back to the period when the nations of Central America were in their prime, and the Indians call it *Malinche*—without knowing or remembering the associations connected with the name, which, the intelligent reader need not be told, was that of the famous Indian girl who guided the army of Cortez into Mexico, and who became the mistress of the conqueror. The Lacandones are said to be very fond of this air, although ignorant of its significance. They play it on the *chirimiya*, a sort of double flute of native origin, having something of the powers of our clarionet. I was not able to learn that the melody is connected with any song or native ballad.

MALINCHE.



AIR OF PETEN.—No. 1.



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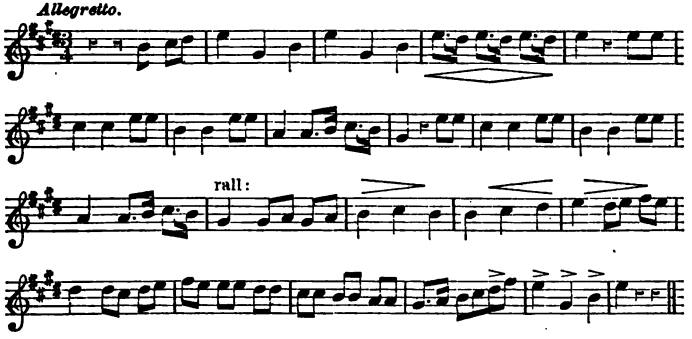

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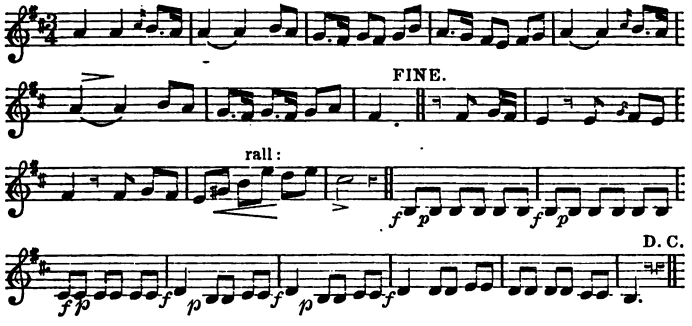


The sound of arms has been but seldom heard in the peaceable district of Peten, since the times of Don Martin de Ursua. The political storms which are felt in Guatemala are but feebly echoed here. No one troubles himself particularly about the form or the *personelle* of the government under which he lives, or questions the propriety of its acts. The watchwords, "Humanity and Liberty," do not vibrate on these shores as on the other side of the Atlantic and in Northern America. Spaniards under the viceroys, Mexicans after the enfranchisement of the colonies, then federalists, and now citizens of an

independent republic, the inhabitants of Peten, without taking any part in the contest, always range themselves under the banner of the successful party. The corregidors and the alcaldes, in their paternal administration of affairs, represent all the power and dignity of the State. The name which the village bears, testifies to the peaceful spirit of its people. Cirilo Flores, Vice President of the republic, fell a victim to popular fury, incited by the priests and serviles, in Los Altos, in 1826. Soon after, when the liberal party to which he belonged regained power, they sought to do honor to his name by giving it to a town which had never been stained by blood, or disgraced by political excesses.

I was witness of the philosophical indifference of the people, when the news of the rupture of the federal compact, and the organization of the State as an independent republic first reached the chief town of the district. Such is the delay in communicating with the capital, that a political act which took place on the 21st of March, 1847, was only made known in Flores on the 10th of July following, after a lapse of three months and a half!

This country, which enjoys such perfect quiet, and where the people live in profound ignorance of all that takes place in the world outside, is one of the most hospitable I have ever visited. I can never forget the kindness of which I was the recipient there, nor the perfect harmony which seemed to exist among the people themselves. Equality of position and education, doubtless, contributes largely to this happy result. Vanity and envy, those mortal enemies of concord, find but little to feed on in Flores. The most intelligent of the people did not hesitate to confess their ignorance, and begged me to instruct them; but I soon found that want of application paralyzed their aptitude and nullified their ambition. I must add, that throughout the whole district the people are extremely gentle in manner, and that assaults on life and property are unknown.

The day following that on which I was first able to get out of my house was a memorable one to me. I was at last free from fever, and wishing to make a trial of my strength, I proposed to make the voyage around the lake, which I had had so long in contemplation, in company with my old friend the alcalde. We started in the morning; the temperature was delightful and everything wore, to me at least, a roseate hue. I could never tire of admiring the transparence of the water, the marine plants which covered the bottom of the lake, the green islands, the wooded shores, and the ærial perspective of the promontories, bathed in the morning dew. But while moving off from the shore, happy in the mere sensation of existence, my ears were startled by the sudden tolling of the village bell. The sound seemed preternaturally distinct, and sent a chill to my heart, which checked my exuberance of feeling; for I knew that it announced the demise of a poor stranger like myself, an Englishman from Belize, whom bad fortune in trade had ruined, and who had sought refuge here from the importunity of creditors, or at least, forgetfulness of his troubles. Two days before, finding himself failing fast, he had appealed to me, as a drowning man clutches at straws, to save his life. But alas, his disease was past my skill, and I was obliged to confess alike my ignorance and inability to do him good. All day long the pale face of the poor stranger rose before my eyes, and reminded me how narrowly I had escaped his sad fate.

At about an oar's length from the shore, the bottom of the lake begins to shelve downward with great rapidity, and the water soon becomes of great depth. This peculiarity, which reminds one of the conformation of lakes of volcanic origin, struck me forcibly, yet there is nothing indicating the action of fire in the mineralogy of the country, the principal elements of which are coarse limestone, gypsum and silex. The vast reservoir of the lake is encircled and shut in by wooded hills.

No reeds appear on its surface, except in the immediate vicinity of the land, where may be seen the beautiful white *nymphæa* similar to that of Palizada. During times of scarcity, the poorer people gather the seeds of this plant, which they grind and use in making bread, after the manner of the Egyptians and Chinese. This bread is said to be insipid, slightly astringent, and far from nutritious. The bottom of the lake, as far as the eye can reach, is covered with sedge, *confervaceæ*, and other aquatic plants, which afford shelter to the crocodiles.

After we had proceeded a short distance, the alcalde directed my attention to the beautiful aspect of the village, on its island throne, as seen from the water; and in truth I could not but admire the picture. The foliage of the trees concealed the nakedness of the soil, as also the rubbish accumulated on its declivity. The most squalid huts, from this distance, presented a picturesque appearance; the slender cocoa trees, scattered about on the shore, seemed tastefully grouped; in a word, all vulgar details were lost in an harmonious assemblage of houses and verdure, affording another illustration of the adage that "distance lends enchantment to the view!" Does not this also apply to the path of life, and is it not a physiological phenomenon of striking similarity, that the past and the future are invested by our imagination with far greater charms than the present?

After visiting several uncultivated islands, admirably adapted for supplying Flores with fruits and vegetables, we steered for the steep promontory which projects into the lake and divides it into two basins of unequal extent. Here and there the virgin soil bears marks of culture, and alternating with the wild vegetation may be seen the large leaves of the bananna tree, and the pale verdure of the sugar-cane. We landed in a lonely little bay, and crossing over the dry rocky soil, on which grew a species of *inga*, the pods of which are

used for dyeing, we directed our steps toward a group of huts which had been described to me as constituting the most important industrial establishment of the country.

This proved to be nothing more nor less than a native sugar mill, in which is manufactured the greater part of the sugar used in the district. Let the reader imagine to himself two cylinders of hard wood placed vertically on each side of a third, which revolves between them through means of a long shaft, to which is attached two oxen, driven by a little boy, and he will have a picture of a *trapiche de azucar*, or Central American sugar mill. The cane, which is fed by hand, is crushed between the central and outer cylinders, and the juice is caught in a trough, hollowed from a single log, placed beneath, whence it is ladled out to the kettles, in which it is gradually reduced to sugar. This is roughly moulded, without purification, into square blocks, weighing about three pounds each, which are wrapped in the dry husks of maize, or in plantain leaves. It is then ready for market, under the name of *chancaca*. It has a strong taste of molasses, but if refined, would equal the best sugar of any country. The process of refining, however, is not generally understood, and is practised in but few localities in Tabasco and Guatemala, and even in these very imperfectly.

After learning the little that was to be ascertained concerning this poor little mill, which, as I have said, is the industrial marvel of Peten, we continued our direction across the promontory, and soon discovered on its other side a vast sheet of water, encircled by forests, and reflecting like a mirror the rays of the morning sun, without a ripple on its surface. Nothing in the landscape reminded me of our proximity to the equator. The great trees which shadowed over us, the flowers, the grass which we trod under foot, all, in the eyes of a superficial observer, might belong to Europe as well as to the new world. The Indian villages of San Andres and San José,

though distant a league and a half, were clearly visible. They are built upon the flank of a hill, sloping gently to the water, and each contains a population of about five thousand souls. Not a trace of cultivation, no movement, no noise, not even that occasioned by the stroke of an axe or an oar, enlivened the land or disturbed the water. These shores were formerly peopled by the *Coboxes*, one of the most powerful tribes of the Itzaes.* Their degenerate descendants now live in almost complete idleness, profiting by their isolation to indulge in drink, which is their ruling passion. From the point where we paused, we saw towards the north-east a flat, uncultivated island, of greater size than that of Flores; and covered with tall trees. I was assured there are no ruins upon it, although it had apparently been inhabited. While I was admiring the placidity of the lake, the alcalde told me of the terrific tempests which sometimes agitate its lowest depths. When the north-east winds sweep the clouds from the Atlantic towards Peten, the waters of the lake become discolored, its banks are undermined and washed away, and the waves roll in on its shores like those of the ocean. Woe to the unfortunate oarsman whom the tempest surprises on the lake, for never again will he set his foot on the land! When the storm has past, his canoe may, perhaps, be seen drifting about on its surface, but the waters will never give up his corpse, except perhaps to the alligators which haunt its shores. Catastrophes of this kind are of frequent occurrence, and a year scarcely passes in which some inhabitant of San Andres or San José does not become a victim of these meteorological disturbances.

This beautiful lake, according to a tradition still current in the country, bore, during the time of the Itzaes, the name of *Nohuken*, translated by the Spaniards, "beber mucho," or

* The *Coboxes* occupied twelve villages on the northern shore of the lake. —*Cogolludo*, lib. v. c. 5.

"drink much;" referring probably to the circumstance that it is without an outlet.

The chronicles refer to it variously as the Lake of Itza, of the Lacandones, and of Peten; but as the Lacandones were located elsewhere, and as the district of Peten contains other lakes, the name of Itza seems to be the most appropriate, and carries with it recollections of the warlike people who formerly lived on its shores. The division of the lake in which is situated the island of Flores, is only three leagues in length by a half or three quarters of a league in breadth; the other division, however, is ten or twelve leagues in length, by a league and a quarter in width. Its circumference is estimated at twenty-six leagues. Its depth, in most places, exceeds thirty fathoms. The shores are defined by a girdle of broken, calcareous hills, which are more or less silicious. No rivers or even a brook of any importance, falls into it; nevertheless it has been observed, that during the time of droughts the waters fall but little, while fearful overflows have frequently threatened with destruction the buildings situated on the lower levels of the island of Flores. To the east of the Lake of Itza are a series of smaller lakes, which extend in the direction of the Rio Hondo, and which irrigate uninhabited and almost unknown regions. These lakes form a chain of considerable extent, the links of which run into each other during the rainy season. This circumstance will, perhaps, some day serve to relieve Peten from its isolation by facilitating intercourse with the Atlantic.*

After having remained sufficiently long to appreciate and

* The eastern extremity of the Lake of Itza is only separated from that of Sacpeten (White Island) by half a league of land; thence to the Lake of *Macanché* is but two leagues; and from thence to the Lake of *Yax-haa* there are twelve leagues of swampy ground. The last-named lake is not far from that of *Sacnab*, which frequently unites its waters with those of the Rio Hondo, which falls into the Atlantic near Belize.

admire the solitary grandeur of the lake, we retraced our steps to our canoe. I was much exhausted, and I considered that I had ventured sufficiently far, after my long and debilitating confinement. I did not, however, regret my excursion. In returning, we came upon a shoal of silvery fish, known in the country under the name of *cilis*. This species is not used for food at Flores, as it is considered unhealthy, owing to a milky secretion beneath its skin. I feel assured that this prejudice is without foundation, although the flesh of the *cilis* has a slightly bitter flavor, which doubtless gave rise to the notion. This fish is gregarious and abundant, and cannot readily be confounded with any other variety. I had some difficulty in obtaining a specimen, for it will not take a hook, and nets are unknown in Flores. Fishermen make use of spears only, and they did not fail to make me pay roundly for their services.*

A few days after this excursion, we undertook a second to the opposite shore of the lake, visiting the *Cueva de Jobitsinal*, a spacious cavern adorned with large and beautiful stalactites, which are well worthy of mention among the curiosities of the country. This cave is a place of frequent resort for the inhabitants of Flores, who pride themselves on possessing what they believe to be the finest cavern in the world.

Peten, in its geographical position, its history, and in respect to its population, belongs naturally to Yucatan, of which it constitutes the most elevated part. Nothing of importance in its configuration obstructs the relationship between the two countries. The same low ridge of mountains extends through both; they are both accessible through the same valleys, and are separated only by immense forests. If we glance at Guatemala, to which Peten belongs politically, we shall

* The *cilis* belongs to the genus *chatœssus*, which is a member of the salmon family. The species which I discovered in the Lake of Itza seems to be a new one.

find, on the contrary, that an abrupt ridge of the Cordilleras rises between them, like a natural rampart. Commerce and intercourse stop at the feet of this obstacle, insurmountable even for mules. Mountain torrents and dense forests also combine to isolate still further a region of country which neither political interests, commercial relations, or sympathy of origin or race connect with the States to the southward.

The chronicles of the country inform us that the conqueror of the Itzaes, Don Martin de Ursua, having exhausted his own pecuniary resources, as well as those of his friends in the enterprise, was greatly embarrassed when it became a question of organizing his territorial acquisitions. In this extremity he applied to Guatemala, which assumed the responsibility of all the expenses, and took possession of the country. Such was the origin of an annexation which never became complete: for the clergy of Peten, by a strange anomaly, are always chosen from the bishopric of Merida. There is still a marked difference between the gentle and hospitable manners of the people of the district and the rude barbarism of the Indians of Vera Paz, who belong to a family of different dialect, and with a different history.

The most remarkable feature of the country, especially near its centre, consists in its numerous groups of wooded hills, alternating with level savannas, which give it a constantly varying and charming aspect. Going to the southwest, however, we encounter veritable mountains, outliers of the great chains of Cajabon. These give rise, not far from Dolores, to the rivers Usumasinta and Machaquilan, as also to the Mopan and others less known, which fall from the opposite slope. From this point the waters radiate in all directions, and although but moderately elevated it sends its tributes into both oceans, irrigating vast, solitary wastes, which are unknown even to the inhabitants of Peten themselves. And here I may mention, as an illustration of their limited geo-

graphical knowledge, that but a short time before my arrival, they discovered, for the first time, a large and beautiful stream, in the neighborhood of San Luis, of which no previous suspicion existed. Some enterprising citizens of Flores resolved to explore it, but, with their usual instability of purpose, abandoned the idea at the end of a few days.

The soil of Peten is very fertile. It produces two crops of maize in a year, yielding not less than two hundred per cent., and that without any manuring of the soil. Besides the common *maiz blanco*, or white maize, which may be planted from March to May, and gathered within ninety days after, the people cultivate another and still more precocious variety, which matures at the end of seven weeks after planting. Cacao, of excellent quality, grows spontaneously in the forests of Peten, but is most abundant in the neighborhood of San Luis. Tobacco, of a very aromatic variety, flourishes exuberantly in the very streets of Flores. Coffee produces the first year after planting. Vanilla and Tabasco pepper abound in the forest and fill it with their perfume. Gum copal, the *naba*, lignumvitæ, dye-woods of many kinds, sarsaparilla, and a multitude of other productions, of which the seeds, bark and roots furnish articles of utility and commerce, are abundant all over the district. The cattle, pastured during the whole year in luxuriant and ever-green savannas, are with justice highly prized in Belize. The colonial government well appreciated Peten in this respect, and established here many large cattle haciendas, which gave the country a much higher prosperity than it now has, since this branch of industry has been suffered to decline. Beef was then cheap and abundant, while milk, butter and cheese, which are now considered great luxuries, were in common use, and numbered among the necessities of the people. The horses of the district were also much valued, particularly for the supposed peculiar hardness of their hoofs, which rendered shoeing them

unnecessary. The truly national wealth thus developed for the common good, on the separation of the colonies from Spain, became the prey of a small number of grasping speculators, acting under the authority of the new government, which affected to succeed to all the rights and properties of the old; and in their hands these great herds of cattle, created with so much care, were rapidly dissipated and consumed. The present generation has not yet become reconciled to the loss, and there is little doubt that they would be glad to exchange their present liberties for the flourishing dependence of former days.

Peten, although occupying an isolated position, is nevertheless traversed by four great lines of communication, which, starting from Flores as a centre, run nearly in the direction of the four cardinal points, as follows: to Yucatan on the north, the distance to Merida being one hundred and sixty-three leagues; to Belize, on the east, distance forty-four leagues; to Guatemala, on the south, distance one hundred and fifty-six leagues, and to Tabasco on the west, the distance to Campeachy being one hundred and thirty-eight leagues. A few observations on these various routes may, perhaps, be acceptable to future travellers. That to Yucatan is less solitary, and freer from forests than that to Campeachy, by which I reached Flores. During the first week the traveller passes through solitudes almost destitute of water. On the seventh day he reaches the village of Conception, after which inhabited places succeed each other, at short intervals, all the way to Merida. In this direction, the territory of Peten is projected in the form of an acute triangle far into the heart of Yucatan, the last hamlet, *Nohbecan*, under the authority of Guatemala in that direction, being ten days' journey from Flores, and only six from Campeachy. This anomaly, so unfavorable to the good administration and territorial integrity of the two countries, can only be explained by supposing that this region

was under the domination of the Itzaes, to whose rights Guatemala succeeded.

Thirty-five years ago some inhabitants of Peten, journeying towards the east, on the course of the Mopan river, were one day greatly astonished on unexpectedly discovering, in the direction of the sea, a city of which they had never before heard. It was the English colony of Belize. They returned to Flores, gave an account of their discovery, and the local administration, thinking it might be turned to profit, undertook to open a route of communication between the two settlements.* The English did not meet their advances with great warmth; they had no very exalted opinion of the *marimba*, and felt but little sympathy for a population which produced little, and consumed less. Their opinion has not yet materially changed, and they have manifested the same indifference in respect of the improvements made by the people of Peten in opening a new road leading to their establishment, which shortens the journey by three days, as compared with that which was first pursued. They pretend that the inhabitants of Peten only go down for the purpose of overreaching them, and that in matters of sale or exchange they forget that there should be reciprocity and good faith. I cannot affirm that these charges are unfounded; the traits which they imply are perfectly in keeping with the character of a people having all the instability of children, who are far from possessing a well-balanced intelligence, and who are, moreover, without fixed principles.

The old road to Belize follows the course of the river Mopan towards the north; the new one cuts directly across the forest, towards the east. After six days of foot-travel,

* The existence of Belize was not always a mystery at Peten, for the Spanish government, toward the middle of the last century, concentrated here a large force for an attack on the English colony. The succeeding generations, however, had lost all remembrance of the place; at least so I have been assured.

the first *banco* (it is thus that the Spaniards designate the English stations on the banks of the Mopan) is reached. From thence canoes are taken, and the voyage is completed in ten days.

If the reader will look at his map, he will find that, hydrographically, Belize is admirably situated. From the point where the Mopan ceases to be navigable, it is but three days journey to the San Pedro river. In the interval no serious obstacle occurs, and it is most probable that a careful *reconnaissance* of the lakes would lead to some discovery favorable to the union of the two bodies of water. It is thus that the Gulf of Mexico and the Bay of Honduras could be united by an almost continuous system of navigation. True, the solitude of the intermediate regions, which are entirely uninhabited, greatly lessens all present interest in any system of intercommunication which may be projected at this point.

The nature of the road to Guatemala will appear as we proceed; it is only necessary to mention here that it is both longer and more difficult than the others.

From what has been said, it will be seen that, taking whatever direction we may from Peten, it is indispensable to traverse a wilderness of greater or less extent before reaching an inhabited region of country. This circumstance, independent of the bad state of its interior roads, must limit the development of the district for a long period, and almost effectually prevent any considerable export of its productions towards the north, the direction which they would naturally be apt to take, as well on account of the extent of the markets in that direction as their comparative contiguity. The route to Guatemala is utterly unavailable for commerce. There seems to be, in fact, but one outlet to the country, that in the direction of Belize—unless, indeed, the unexplored region to the south-west conceals some readier means of communication with Isabal or the Bay of Honduras. By establishing a few

villages along the now lonely road to Mopan, the government would do much to withdraw Peten from its present stagnant seclusion, develop its resources, and augment its population.

It may be added that the resources of the district would, no doubt, meet with proper appreciation, if better known. The Rio San Pedro, also, is worthy of attention, not only as connected with the interests of Peten, but also with those of Tabasco. If it be true that, at twelve leagues from Sacluc, and at only three leagues from the Lake of Itza, this river is navigable, then nature herself has prepared the way for the union of the two districts. True, these considerations can inspire but little interest in Europe; the region is too far distant and the object to be attained relatively too insignificant. I hope, however, that the reader will not reproach me for having devoted a few lines to speculations on the future of this little corner of the globe, if only as some sort of return for the hospitality which I received there.

The district of Peten is dry, and enjoys the most salubrious climate of all those portions of Central America which the Spaniards have classed under the general head of *tierras calientes*. Yet the people are periodically affected, when the rainy season comes on, with dysentery and other inflammatory maladies of a similar character. These affections at first are generally very slight, but through ignorance and want of proper care they frequently terminate fatally. There is no physician nor apothecary in the whole district. The inhabitants are forced to prescribe for themselves. They administer ipecac for the diarrhea, and if this does not relieve the patient, he takes spirits of nitre in tamarind water. Indigestion is cured by an emollient and mucilaginous liniment prepared from the leaves of the cactus. Sulphate of quinine is used in cases of intermittent fever; which are most frequent in March and April, when the drouth has reduced the rivers to their lowest level; but this medicine is difficult to procure. These are the

principal diseases of the country. Some few contagious maladies have been introduced from Belize, but the people of Peten innocently attribute them to every cause except the real one. During my sojourn here I was frequently consulted by invalids, particularly by those in the latter category, and although I was not so fortunate as to effect a single cure, still I soon acquired the reputation of an excellent physician.*

* There is one fact not generally known, namely, that inflammatory maldies are less frequent under the tropics than those which proceed from debility of the organs, or suspension of the natural functions of the system. Under the continuous heat, the cellular tissue, the basis of the animal functions, becomes relaxed, and loses a great part of its contractile power, whence results, among other phenomena, a deficiency of lymphatic circulation (*circulation lymphatique*), especially in the extremities of the members. Hence the difficulty of healing wounds or bruises in those parts of the person. And while the muscular energy of the system becomes enfeebled, the nervous apparatus, on the other hand, acquires a singular irritability. The slightest wounds are excessively painful, and their tendency is towards tetanus, which seems to be without a remedy.

Dysentery, in Guatemala, is almost always preceded by a suspension of perspiration; the vital forces are turned from the skin to the part affected. In the opinion of the native physicians the liver is the general seat of the disease, and hence they seek to reach that organ through vomits and special medicines. It is needless to say that in a climate where health depends chiefly on the proper discharge of the functions of the skin, strangers should not neglect to protect the person from sudden variations of temperature.

I did not observe any cases of *goitre* in Peten, nor anywhere on the Atlantic side of the continent; but this affection is endemic in certain localities near the Pacific. It seems to be hereditary, and is common to all races, white and dark, and frequently develops itself in forms more monstrous than in the Alps and Pyrenees, and, as well as there, is often complicated with cretanism. Spread over the burning plains of Nicaragua, and found equally on the heights of *Los Altos*, this disease ridicules all the systems that have been propounded as to its origin. It is pretended that the sea air has a good effect on the goitre, and cases are cited of its having been entirely cured in the course of long voyages. Without opposing this notion, I feel inclined to assign the cure to change of air and climate, the best of all remedies, when the affection is not too deeply seated.

Sores, under the tropics, especially when they occur on the inferior mem-

Of course, in a little community lost in a desert, great advancement is not to be expected in the arts and sciences. Reading, writing, and the first three rules in arithmetic comprise the extent of the instruction to be acquired in Flores. The schoolmaster receives monthly, for each pupil, the modest sum of a rial and a half (about eighteen cents), one third of which is paid by the family of the scholar, and the remainder from the public fund. There are schools in every village in the district, but the Indians obstinately refuse to permit their children to attend them. No stimulant can induce them to cultivate their intelligence, not even the natural desire to free themselves from the dominion of the whites, by acquiring the scanty information which the government requires of its mu-

bers, require prompt and particular attention. I may cite my own experience, in which a mere scratch became, through neglect, a serious wound, very nearly costing me my life. It resolved itself into an indurated ulcer, deep and exceedingly painful, and wide-spread gangrene was rapidly setting in, when Providence sent me a remedy in the unguent called *basilicon*, which a friend in Flores had accidentally brought with him from Belize. I may add here, for the benefit of persons proposing to travel under the tropics, the composition of an ointment employed with great success in Havana to cure wounds, namely; beeswax, *four* parts; turpentine of Venice, *one* part; alum *one-eighth* part; powdered camphor, a *ninth* part. The wax and turpentine should be melted together in a sand bath or over a gentle fire, and the alum and camphor added, the whole to be stirred rapidly until it forms a homogenous mass. The ointment thus prepared, when used, should be melted and dropped in the wound, which should then be covered with a bandage, to be renewed every three days.

In respect of the bites of venomous serpents, I advise the use of active caustics, such as concentrated sulphuric and nitric acids, or better still, chloride of antimony, which acts more rapidly, but requires to be used with greater precaution, since it is decomposed by contact with the blood. The venom of the *jararaca*, or *nahayuca*, of which I have spoken elsewhere, is singularly active. When its fangs have penetrated the skin, it is rare that the patient survives beyond a few hours. If they happen to have touched any notable part of the nervous system, death may be expected within from ten to twenty minutes. The traveller in these countries, therefore, should always have at hand the most energetic remedies against accidents from this cause, which should be applied with the utmost promptitude.

nicipal functionaries. The entire population is, therefore, in a state of almost incredible ignorance; they are hardly possessed of sufficient intelligence to avail themselves in the most limited manner of the gifts of nature. Tobacco, for instance, is not exported, although of superior quality, but it is consumed here without the least preparation, just as it is gathered. The vanilla vainly wastes its perfume in the forests; it is allowed to rot on its stem. Although possessed of excellent cacao, the people drink a shocking and indescribable beverage; and although the soil is fertile in the extreme, fruits and vegetables are very rare. To make up for the want of vegetables, where the taste for sweetmeats is universal, they preserve the tomato, the fleshy flower of the *plumiera*, bread, and even eggs. The latter is a much esteemed preparation, of which, however, I neglected to procure the recipe. Since the discovery of Belize, wheaten flour has been introduced, and is much liked in Flores. The people make bread of it, or rather a kind of cake, which is usually eaten with chocolate. The *tortilla* of maize is, however, the principal article of food throughout the *tierras calientes*.

When the last census was taken (in 1839) the population of Peten was 6,327, disseminated over a surface of nearly 2,280 square leagues. These figures give only a little over two inhabitants to the square league. In other words, it proves that the country is almost a desert, and that it occupies the lowest place, in respect of population, among the provinces of the republic. The Indians preponderate here numerically, as well as in Yucatan, and their character, as well as the natural productions of the district, strengthen the resemblance which I have before alluded to as existing between the two countries.

Wild beasts are not abundant in the forests of the district, excepting towards the east, where an occasional jaguar is found. On the other hand, ruminating animals are numer-

ous, as may well be supposed in a country alternating with woods and prairies, where the grass is renewed several times during the year, and where, furthermore, they have but few enemies to encounter. The Itzaes, by a strange superstition which tells well for their morals, associated these quadrupeds with their worship of Divinity, and never permitted them to be molested. When the conquerors for the first time penetrated into the solitudes of Peten, the deer were so tame that the cavaliers were enabled to capture them without an effort.* They require to be hunted more adroitly now, and the skill requisite to shoot them is in itself no small accomplishment.

There are three different species of deer in Peten, the largest of which is called by the people *ciervo*. I saw but one female, which greatly resembled the *cervus mexicanus* of Linnæus. I remarked, on dissecting this doe, that she had a kernel concealed beneath the skin, in the middle of the breast, in which was secreted a sebaceous, inodorous matter, of a greenish brown, the utility of which is unknown to me. The second species is a deer of the brocket family, which the Indians designate under the name of *puusnac*. The third and last species, which, however, I never saw, is said to be smaller than the others. It is called by the Creoles *cabra monte*, and by the Indians *chacyuc*.

The tapir (*danta*), which lives quite alone in the solitudes of the forest, and the peccary (*jalabi*) which frequents the swampy regions, represent, in the central parts of the new world, the pachyderms of the other continent. The habits of these animals, which I remarked for the first time in Peten, and the peculiarities of their organization are doubtless familiar to all my readers.

A kind of rabbit, differing slightly from our own, the ar-

* "Yendo por aquellos campos rasos, avia tantos de venados y corrian tan poco, que luego los alcan cavamos á cavallo y se mataron sobre viente." —*Bernal Diaz*, c. clxxix.

madillo and the agouti (*pieseco*) dreaded by the farmers, who cannot protect their crops from the incursions of these animals, complete the list of the most important mammifers which I found or heard mentioned in the country. The armadillo of Peten lives upon fruits and roots, in the depths of the forests, where he burrows in the earth. He is hunted with dogs, or is smoked out of his retreat. He is highly esteemed as an article of food; his flesh is sweet and tender, and his back is covered with a layer of delicate, unctuous fat. The hunters roast the armadillos in their shell or armor, after having split them open longitudinally. They preserve the fat for burnishing their arms. It is highly prized in Peten.

I must dwell upon the peculiarities of the *geomys mexicans* a strange variety of rodent, first discovered, as its name would indicate, in Mexico.* The *geomys* is a compact animal of a reddish brown color, about the size of a large rat, and somewhat resembling the mole. It has a conically shaped, depressed head, with small eyes, and is rendered very unpleasing to the sight by great cheek pouches. Its cylindrically shaped body is covered with long, thin, stiff hair, and terminates in a little, bare tail. Enormous projecting teeth cover the aperture of its mouth, and its feet are provided with long conically shaped nails. Altogether it is a most revolting animal in appearance, and its habits are quite in harmony with its looks. The play of the incisors in this rodent is entirely exterior to the lips; they are only useful in cutting roots, as their situation and shape would indicate. Vegetable substances, after being introduced into the animal's mouth, are masticated by the molars. The *geomys*, called *tuza* in Peten, lives underground, in the bananna and sugar-cane plan-

* The *geom. mexicans* was first described by M. Brants in 1827 after a specimen existing in the Museum at Berlin. It is the *tucan* of Hernandez (*Hist. Anim. Novæ Hispaniæ.*) There are eight different varieties of this animal to be found between Hudson's Bay a: l the centre of Guatemala.

tations, where they often commit sad havoc. The inhabitants are extremely fond of them as articles of food, but I never found them palatable. The three specimens which I obtained differ materially from each other. The body of the first is uniform in its color; the bodies of the two others are marked with a transverse white band, which runs across the upper part of the one, and the lower part of the other.

The forests of Peten appear to be richer in gallinæ than those of Yucatan. The lakes, on the contrary, of great depth and without water grasses, do not attract such swarms of aquatic birds as the swamps of the sea shore. I must mention among the grallic or long-legged family, a very small heron (*ardea exilis*, Gmel.) which I kept for some weeks, and which greatly amused me with its belligerent demonstrations. As soon as any one approached the dark corner in the house which it had appropriated to itself, the little creature assumed a hostile attitude. With both wings outspread, its neck contracted, and with eyes glaring upon the intruder, it swayed its little body to and fro as if to intimidate the intruder; then its long neck would spring suddenly forward, and it would endeavor to strike the disturber of its quiet unawares with its bill. I set it at liberty on leaving Flores. Two kinds of swallows (*h. purpurea* L., and *leucoptera*, Gmel.) build their nests in the islands. They emigrate in October, at the first breath of the north winds, and return it is said about the end of January. Among the indigenous humming-birds, I must mention the *orn. Devillei* of Bourc., a species rather rare, but by no means remarkable, several specimens of which I obtained in the gardens of the village.

The family of reptiles offered me a larger field for discovery. In fact, quite a number of new, or hitherto undescribed species were the fruits of my investigations. I may mention the alligator of the Lake of Itza, the crested *corythophane* and the banded basilisk, as among the most interesting. The

first is a true *crocodile*, possessing all the characteristics of the species.* It attains a great length. We caught one measuring at least five yards, but the line broke before we were able to drag it to the shore. The eggs of this reptile are not larger than those of the tame duck, which they resemble in their cylindrical shape. They exhale a strong odor of musk, which renders them, as well as the flesh of the reptile, unfit for food. I do not think this species confined to the Lake of Itza; it appears to me to be the same with that frequenting the Usumasinta, and the neighboring lakes. I cannot, however, state this as a fact, not having had the opportunity of determining their identity.

The crested *corythophane* (*C. Cristatus* of Boié) is a singular lizard, much resembling the chameleon in shape and habits. I had the honor of fixing the habitat of this reptile for the first time. The few specimens which were known had been discolored by alcohol. I remarked that the color of this reptile varied in hue, not like that of the chameleon under the influence of excitement, but like that of certain batrachians, according to the intensity of the light. In the dark forests, where I found several, they were of a uniform brown color, with a few dark spots here and there, which were scarcely perceptible. Later, on being exposed to the light, they assumed a greenish grey color, which became lighter and lighter towards the abdomen, which was white. I observed that every evening, at sunset, they resumed their original hue, which did not entirely change again before ten o'clock in the morning. Like the chameleon, they are very slow in movement, and often repose motionless for hours. They are however capable of strong

* The head of the crocodile is longer and less obtuse at the end than that of the alligator. The denticulated crest, on the outer edge of its hind feet, the membrane which unites its toes, the disposition of its tusks, which instead of fitting into cavities in the upper jaw, run in simple creases—these constitute the principal differences between the two species.

excitement, for I have seen them spring up several inches above the ground, to snap at children who teased them.

The banded basilisk (*B. Vittalus* of Wiegm.), in common with the above mentioned reptile, belongs to the family of iguanas. It is rarely to be met with in collections, for the same uncertainty existed respecting its country and its color, as concerning the *corythophane*. The body of this lizard is of a greenish hue shading on blue, according to the direction of the light, and it is speckled with small black spots. Its head is brown, marked laterally with two white lines, extending from its nose to the base of its neck. Its tail has violet rings, and its abdomen is of a dead white. A skinny projection, slender and triangular, which rises vertically on the top of its head, distinguishes the male from the female, and gives it a very peculiar appearance. This lizard is the scourge of the gardens of Flores, where it destroys quantities of fruit and vegetables, particularly tomatoes, of which it is very fond. It crawls up trees and walls with great agility. When it is captured, fear paralyzes and renders it motionless, but it soon recovers sufficiently to take an offensive attitude, and it angrily snaps at every object within reach.

I have but little to say relative to the turtles of Peten, where, notwithstanding, I found a species never previously described, (the *emys areolata* of Dum.) Nor can I say much concerning the numerous varieties of serpents found in the district, among which is the fearful *jararaca*, which the Indians here call *kancicib*.

There are fifteen different kinds of fish in the Lake of Itza, which are almost without exception peculiar to it. It is asserted, that at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards, they were of larger size than at present; which fact was accounted for in the following manner: the Indians who inhabited the islands, not having near by any soil proper for burial purposes, used to dispose of their dead by throwing them into the

lake. The fishes profited by this circumstance, and feasted and fattened on the corpses. I fancy, however, that the crocodiles obtained the greater share! The conquerors, informed of this custom, conceived a great disgust for the fish of the lake, and abstained for a long time from their use.* It would appear, however, that the soldiers of Cortez had shown themselves less fastidious a few years before, for we have their testimony to the fact that they caught large numbers of these anthropophagous fishes, which they compared to insipid shad.†

I obtained a specimen of each of the different species. For the most part they greatly resemble our perch, although they have but one dorsal fin. The variety called *blanco* (*cichla sp.*) is the largest and most highly esteemed. It is said to attain a yard and a half in length, but I never saw one of this size. The *copetuda* (*chromis sp.*) is also considered of good quality; it is easily recognized by its frontal prominence. I may mention, among the most curious of these fishes, the little *chulchi*, which is only about three inches in length. It is extremely voracious, resembling the pike in this respect, yet of a different species. Eels are also found, of a species allied to the conger, which are sometimes two yards in length. The flesh of all these fishes is dry, and during a portion of the year far from savory. They only become delicate in flavor when the rains have washed the vegetable *debris* and the ooze from the neighboring hills into their domains. In general, they have but few bones, like those of the ocean. They are of brilliant colors, yellow and blue predominating. I was

* Villagutierre, lib. i., c. 2. This author relates that "from feeding on the bodies thus thrown in the lake, the fish became very large, especially the turtles; but, during the whole of their stay, the Spaniards would not touch them, so disgusted were they with the nature of the food which produced such plump and savory creatures." The Indian auxiliaries, however, who accompanied the Spaniards, do not seem to have had any such scruples, for they ate of them freely.

† Bernal Diaz, c. clxxix.

struck, when surveying them, with the independence manifested by tropical nature in its production of details. It may be said that the generative forces, in regions near the equator, are not subjected to such rigorous laws as those which shackle them in our climate. Here the same species frequently changes color several times. The *blanco*, for instance, now glistens like a silver blade, and then assumes a beautiful orange hue. The *buul* (*chromis sp.*) is of a dazzling yellow, shaded by transverse bands of brown, or else is of a uniform salmon color. It is marked by a blue spot, encircled by a white rim, which occasionally makes its appearance at the root of the tail. The tail of the *phultas* (*anostoma?*) has a large rusty colored spot, an ornament, however, which is confined to the males. Almost all the different species have some marked peculiarity in color, while our fresh-water fish are only of neutral tints, the effect of which is extremely monotonous.

It now only remains for me to describe the invertebræ and the insects, which, from their dazzling colors, their size, and the singularity of their shapes, are well worthy the attention of naturalists. To this day I cannot avoid regretting the loss, by damps during my illness, of the precious collection which I had accumulated on my journey from Tenosique to Flores. Among the few specimens which were saved I may mention the *inca Weberi*, Latr., and the *plusiotis auripes*, Gr., a beautiful insect of malachite green on the back, and of a metallic silver color under the belly. The great coleopteras of Guiana and Tabasco, the giant prione, and numerous other varieties, abound in the forests of this region. Besides these prodigious insects, which powerfully impress the traveller, but which are harmless, there swarm an infinite variety of the annoying insects of warm countries. A bug similar to ours haunts the habitations of Flores; even the hammocks do not escape its encroachments. They reach them by aid of the cords by

which they are suspended. The meshes of the netting, if great care be not taken, speedily become the seat of an incredibly active propagation. The old walls and dark corners of the houses, are the refuges of a flat insect of livid grey, revolting in appearance, which belongs to the arachnidan family. The people call it *kulim*, and fear its bite, the danger of which they greatly exaggerate. True, it produces a painful inflammation, accompanied with fever, but it has no serious results. The *kulim* rarely makes its appearance by daylight; it comes out at night, like the bug, guided by the same instinct and by the same inexplicable thirst for human blood. Lemon juice is considered to be the best antidote for the venom of this insect.* Here we find the microscopic flea, known in Central America under the name of *nigua*, which introduces itself beneath the skin, particularly in the sole of the foot near the great toe, where it deposits its eggs. The bag containing the eggs becomes, in a few days, of the size of a pea, and a dull annoying pain succeeds to the itching which first betrays the presence of the insect. It is then necessary to extract this bag before the eggs within are hatched, or the pores of the skin will speedily be invaded by a host of animalculous tigers. The wound is afterwards cicatrized by means of tobacco ashes. The *nigua* (*pulex penetrans*, L.) was introduced, it is said, from Guatemala. Lately it has infested the English colony of Belize.

I regret exceedingly my inability to add any information to the knowledge which we possess concerning the antiquities of the country. It is not my fault that it so happens, for I was not ignorant of the importance of this field of exploration. It was at hand, and I had arranged every thing, during my convalescence, for a complete reconnaissance of the country

* It is the *argas talagé* described by M. Guérin in the *Revue Zoologique* of July, 1849.

with reference to them. I was not deterred from carrying out my good intentions by fear of danger, but rather from dread of losing, by the rashness of a single day, the fruits of a tedious recovery. When I left Flores, I was still very weak, and walking was particularly injurious to me.

One must, like myself, have been threatened with gangrene, without possessing a single remedy, and without any assistance at hand, in order to appreciate the fears which paralyzed my exertions. I trembled at the mere idea of a relapse, as one who has just escaped shipwreck, still hears the roar of the ocean in his ears. Besides, the approach of the bad season precluded the possibility of my extending my stay near the lake, without seriously compromising the general purpose of my travels. I felt deeply pained at leaving in Peten the hopes which I had brought there with me, but I resisted temptation. May some more fortunate traveller profit by my hints, and fulfill the task which I had marked out, and save from oblivion, if it be still time, the last vestiges of Maya civilization in these regions.

At two days' journey toward the east, starting from the extremity of the lake, there is a second basin of water, of less extent than the first, called *Yax-Haa*. In this lake, on a desert island, may be seen the ruins which an enlightened observer, unfortunately lost to his country and the sciences through the fury of civil war, described some twenty years ago. A square tower of five stories, fifteen yards in height, is the largest monument which now exists there.* There is,

* M. Morelet refers here to Colonel Juan Galindo, an officer of the old republic of Central America, who visited the district of Peten in the year 1832, and has left some account of the monuments in Lake Yax-Haa. He describes the lake as six miles in length, containing four small islands, one high above the water, and covered with sculptured stones. On it is a square tower of five stages or stories, something like that rising in the centre of the palace at Palenque. The lowest story is twenty-two feet square, and each superior one recedes two feet on every side, so that the fifth or superior story

on the southern bank of the lake, another and tolerably well preserved edifice, the precise location of which is known only to the Indians. They discovered it lately and quite accidentally, while repairing the road to Belize.

I was told that two days' journey from San José, in the midst of the forest, in a south-easterly direction from that village, are found three edifices, ornamented with sculptures and great faces (*caras grandes*) in relief, similar to those on the monuments of Palenque. No one, not even the corregidor, had ever heard them spoken of in Flores. It was by mere chance that I became possessed of this interesting piece of information. The Indians, as every one knows, are very reserved in all matters relating to their former nationality. Although these ruins were known to many among them, no one had ever betrayed the secret of their existence. Their chief was less scrupulous, and could not resist the golden appeal which I made to him for information, and ended by taking me into his confidence. After much circumlocution, I obtained from him all the requisite information, and we concluded a formal treaty by the terms of which he contracted to render the road to the monuments practicable, and to provide me with guides and laborers, while I was to furnish the provisions, tools, and money for the payment of the men. Rumors concerning my intended visit, nevertheless, got noised about the town, and I perceived, with regret, that a number

is but ten feet square. There appears to be neither entrance nor window in any of the first four stages, but on the fifth stage are two low doors, one on the western, the other on the eastern side, which a man can enter only on his hands and knees. There is a flight of steps, seven feet broad, leading up to the western opening. This upper story contains three inner apartments, without roofs. The stones composing this structure, Galindo affirms are of the same shape with those found at Palenque, but of larger size; and the whole building is less corroded by time, and apparently of later date, than the edifices of Palenque. But while wooden lintels have been found among the ruins at the latter place, here they have entirely disappeared.—T.

of the inhabitants were seized with a sudden passion for archaeology, and were preparing to accompany me. But when my plans were frustrated by the circumstances I have already alluded to, the golden dreams of my escort, who counted upon the discovery of treasure, and were disposed to dispute with me its possession, were rudely dispelled.

The ruins of which I have spoken, seem to be links in a broken chain, extending in the direction of the Rio Hondo and Bacalar. A careful study of them would probably shed some light upon the migration of the Itzaes, and would complete the researches which Messieurs Waldeck and Stephens began in the peninsula of Yucatan. As to the island of Flores, a single glance suffices to prove, circumscribed as it is as to space, that its population must necessarily have been small, and that it could never have been a very important establishment. No fragment of architecture or sculpture; no ruins worthy of consideration, among those covering the island, testify in favor of the ancient edifices described by the chroniclers; and it is problematical if the twenty-one *adoratorios* which they mention, were of such importance as we have been led to believe. I must add that the clay figures which are from time to time exhumed, are very rude and unshapely. I heard of but one object of any value which had been found here; it was a vase of some hard and transparent composition, very carefully wrought, the ornamentation of which seemed to have been copied from that of the turtle or armadillo. It was sold for a trifle to a muleteer of Tenosique, who in turn exchanged it for a horse. Its value increased progressively, until, at last, it reached Tabasco, where it fell into the hands of a merchant of Jonuta.

As to the existence of a mysterious city, inhabited by the Indians who still live in the centre of Peten, as they did of old, pursuing all their ancient habits and practices—this is a notion which must take its place among the fancies of the

imagination. This tale originated in Yucatan, and travellers in relating it, have given it far too great prominence.* The Indian villages of the district of Peten are small and squalid. The inhabitants are subject to the laws of the country, and if a few tribes escape from the Spanish jurisdiction, it is only at the price of dispersion and poverty that they enjoy their independence.

My strength being somewhat restored, I began to make preparations for departure. My collections, carefully embalmed, were only awaiting transportation to Belize. I felt considerable reluctance in parting with them, and in exposing the only practical results of my travels to chance and accident, but as they had now become quite bulky, I found it necessary to limit my amount of baggage. Morin spent several days in arranging and repairing our effects, and when all our preparations were completed, I paid my farewell visit to the corregidor, took leave of my acquaintances, and spent my last night in Flores dreaming of the mysterious Alps which rose blue and distant in the line of our path to Guatemala.

* Stephens's *Incidents of Travel*, etc., vol. ii., p. 194. The story told to Mr. Stephens by the padre of Quiché, of a great aboriginal city, far off in the wilderness, on some unknown tributary of the Usumasinta, is no doubt justly characterized by M. Morelet. There is no good reason for supposing that any such city exists; but it is not improbable that a few towns of ordinary Indian construction may be found in the more secluded districts. The notion of a great city is nevertheless widely entertained, as well by the people of Guatemala and Chiapa, as by those of Yucatan. On the 3d of August, 1849, the Secretary of the State of Chiapa addressed an official letter to the Prefect of the Department of Chilón, stating that he had been informed that in the vicinity of San Carlos Nacarlan, beyond the Sierra de la Pimienta, a great city had been discovered in the distance, with large edifices, and many cattle in its pastures; and that, although there appeared to be no road to it, yet that it was supposed it could not be more than two days distant. He therefore ordered the Prefect to make all possible efforts to reach the city, and to report the results to his office in San Christobal. As nothing further was ever heard of the discovery, it may be presumed that the city was not found by the Prefect.—T.

VII.

THE HILLS.

Departure from Flores—The gift of the corregidor—In the saddle once more—The Savannas—*Juntecchololi*—Voices of the night—Morning mists—Early reminiscences—*El Julek*—The corrosol palm—King of the forest—Rancho of *Chal*—Wayfarers—River San Juan—Hacienda of *Yax-hé*—Aspect of the country—Division of the waters—Lack of historical interest in the country—Among the hills—The calabash—Detestable roads—Mahogany trees—*Tierra fria*—Town of Dolores—Historical episode—Pine forests—Peculiar climate of Dolores—Temperature—Fishes and reptiles—Singularities of the Indians—Their love of seclusion—Fruits—The *avocate*, or alligator pear—The *flora de la calentura*—Scarcity of food—The traveller's fare—Mules and their intelligence—More magnificent palms—Parasitic plants—River Machaquilan—Change in the aspect of the country—Great pines—Town of *Poptun*—Storm—More bad roads—San Luis—The "governor"—The Indians—Their aversion to agriculture—Excellent cacao—Annual religion—Justice in *deshabille*—Indian oratory—Conchological achievements—Venomous reptiles—Rattlesnakes—Lizards—A shock to popular prejudices.

THE day was just breaking, when the corregidor entered my room with a pair of pistols in his hands. The face of the worthy magistrate was grave in the extreme. "Good heavens!" I exclaimed, rising in my hammock, "is the island in danger, Señor Corregidor, that you are up and armed at this early hour?" "No, no," he replied, with a melancholy smile, "the island of Flores is not in danger; these pistols are for your own use, and I beg that you will accept them." I declined, but he insisted, adding, "You are about to leave Yucatan; the Indians whom you will meet with hereafter, are half savages; take great care of yourself and be particularly on your guard against the mixed population which hangs around the outskirts of the villages, for it is made up of dangerous characters."

I gratefully thanked my excellent friend for his suggestions, and accepted the present. The pistols were precisely

what I wanted; for after leaving Palenque, both Morin and myself had made many but ineffectual efforts to procure a pair. Three months later, a favorable opportunity presenting itself, I returned the arms so generously given to me by the corregidor, with a message to the effect, that, for the future, they would probably be more useful to him than to me.

The inhabitants of Flores have a lurking notion that no one can leave their island without tears in his eyes and regret in his heart. At the risk of being considered ungrateful, I am forced to admit that when I took my seat in the canoe which was to bear me away, my eyes were innocent of moisture, and my heart was full of joy. In my delight at leaving, I forgot even to bestow a parting glance upon the village to which I was bidding an eternal farewell!

When we had landed, and our baggage was packed on the backs of our mules, I gave the corregidor a parting embrace, and put spurs to my horse, anxious to enjoy to the fullest extent my renewed health and the liberty from which I had so long been restrained. Never can I forget my first moments of freedom. My feelings seemed to overflow; it was the wild delight of the prisoner who escapes from his dungeon. I felt that I had taken a fresh lease of life; and my new existence was full of the most delightful anticipations. Important changes had taken place during my sojourn in Flores; the rains had given new brilliancy and freshness to the vegetation. The flowers which I had noticed on my arrival were now replaced by fruits. Never did Nature's beauties impress me so forcibly; and I admired them, in their minutest details, with all the enthusiasm of early childhood.

After a journey of five hours through a dense forest, we arrived at the village of Santa Anna, just in time to get under shelter before the afternoon storm came on. At this place commences what is called *The Savannas*, that is to say, an open country, dotted over with clusters of trees and little wooded

hills, but differing greatly from the dreary *llanos* of Mexico and the monotonous *pampas* of La Plata.* Towards the end of July, the date of our journey, these savannas are covered with a beautiful carpet of grass, offering abundant pasturage for numberless herds of cattle; but they were silent and unoccupied. Only a few deer watched us timidly from the edges of the little clumps of forest, and an occasional starling or busy fly-catcher were the sole representatives of the feathered world in the midst of all this natural beauty. I have never seen in any part of the world a region of country which seemed to offer greater attractions to man, or more abundant resources for sustaining a large population; and I could hardly reconcile myself to the fact that it was only one vast solitude. Every moment I expected to hear the familiar bark of some farmer's dog, or to see the smoke curl up from the chimney of some picturesque cottage. But only one green glade succeeded to another, and the hours passed by with scarcely a sign or sound of life to diversify our journey or disturb the repose which seemed to rest on all things like a spell.

We passed our first night at the village of *Juntecchol.* The rocky hills which surround it reminded me of Yucatan. Here we again found the yucca, with its slender stem, and recognized the thin and crooked branches of the *hæmatoxylon.* We saw also in the distance, towering high above the other trees of the forest, what our guides called oaks; but I did not place much reliance on their statement, inasmuch as we were in the very heart of the *tierra caliente*, in the zone of the palm and the plantain.

Hospitality was extended to us in Juntecchol with the

* In Central America, the country is generally classified under three principal designations: *Serrania*, mountainous; *Monte*, wooded; *Sabana*, savanna or prairie land. Much confusion has occurred among geographers and others but slightly acquainted with the Spanish language, by translating *monte*, mountain.

patriarchal simplicity peculiar to poor and isolated settlements. It consisted of fire, water, fodder for our animals, a little ground maize, and shelter for the night. This was doubtless much, but still hardly equal to our requirements; for we had need of rest, and this we failed to obtain. The domicil assigned to us was already occupied by several other guests, not to speak of numerous huge toads, which lurked in obscure corners. We saw, also, with consternation, a swarm of roaches take fright on our entrance, and disappear in the crevices of the walls. But hardly was the light extinguished when we heard them sally forth again, reinforced by numberless nocturnal allies, in a joint foray on whatever they might encounter capable of satisfying their voracity. And still further to irritate our uneasy nerves, the tree-toads which infest the neighboring savanna, and secrete themselves in the thatch of the houses, also struck up a diabolical concert, which was kept up until daybreak, to the utter murder of sleep. I joined with Morin in exclamations of astonishment that a noise so powerful could by any possibility proceed from a creature so insignificant in size.*

The necessity of being surrounded by so many offensive animals and noxious insects, which, not content with sharing your bed and mingling in your food, invade your person and prey on your flesh, it must be admitted, detracts somewhat from the poetry of tropical adventure. Nevertheless, after a few restless nights, and the exhalation of a thousand maledictions, the imagination of the traveller becomes calmed, and his nerves quieted. Sheer weariness finally induces sleep, and

* This is doubtless the same variety of toad referred to by the Licenciado Palacio in his letter to the King of Spain (1576), giving an account of the Province of Izalco, in the ancient kingdom of Guatemala. He says: "There is here a kind of toad, smaller than a frog, which mounts into the trees, and might be taken for a bird. In the rainy season, it makes a fearful noise, like that of a calf, and so loud that I could not have believed it possible, unless I had myself heard the animal."—*Carta al Rey, etc.*, p. 51.

habit, which reconciles us to every discomfort, at last makes us stoical.

I was up early, and hurried out of our hut to cool my fevered forehead in the morning air. What was my surprise, on opening the door, to find the village enshrouded in a dense, milky fog, only comparable with that which we occasionally experience in the late autumn time, in our own country. I could hear the lowing of cattle and the voices of men, preternaturally near and distinct, without being able to make out their forms. It was a reminder of home—of the village of my birth, and the rustic experiences of my youth. Singularly enough, the suggestions afforded by my adventures in these wilds were never of things recent, or connected with my mature years, but always of childhood. Was it because my spirits had been rejuvenated by association with nature in her simplicity and truth, and that the artificialities and conventionalisms of maturer years had given way before her holier teachings? At any rate, the picture of my early home rose before me with all the distinctness of reality. The illusion was so complete, that for the moment no effort could dispel it. I could see the little bridge, the pointed church, with the swallows swarming around its turrets, and distinctly hear the distant shout of the herdsmen, and the sharp crack of the wagoner's whip.

But Morin's proffer of coffee, and the announcement that the mules were saddled and ready for a start, finally roused me from my reverie, which I shall ever remember as a curious psychological incident in my experience.

We breakfasted at a little cattle farm called *el Julek*. Two leagues beyond this point, we left the savannas and again entered the forests. Here nature resumed her tropical dress, and all the resemblances with Europe disappeared from the surrounding country. Myriads of the coyol palm trees, the branches of which are sometimes fifty feet in length,

formed delightful arcades above the road. No description can convey an idea of the fantastic vegetation which here, at every step, drew from our lips an exclamation of surprise or admiration. The *cocos butyracea*, which flourished luxuriantly around us, here bears the name of *corossol*. An oleaginous substance is extracted from its nut which is used in the manufacture of soap. Children delight in the sweet pulp which covers the nut, as well as in the almond which it contains. If the palm of Cuba, in virtue of its erect and lofty stem and majestic beauty, merits the designation of "Queen of Palms," this variety of the same family, from its vigorous growth, wide development, and imperial crown, is certainly entitled to that of the "King of Palms."

We stopped for the night at the rancho *Chal*, so called from a river of the same name in its vicinity. Here we found two parties of travellers, one from Belize, the other from Dolores, who kept up an infinitely confused conversation about their respective adventures, the obstacles which they had overcome, and the various accidents that had befallen them. When such parties meet, their first and mutual inquiry is, "Que tal es el camino?" How's the road? This was duly propounded to us, and in return for our information as to that which we had passed over, we obtained theirs as to that which was ahead. It was not much, but I observed that it seemed satisfactory to our guides.

Early on the following day, we crossed the river San Juan, a beautiful stream, flowing over a gravelly bed, and a tributary of the Usumasinta. Here we turned off a little from the direct road, in order to pass the night at the hacienda of *Yax-hé*, belonging to our principal muleteer. This is a well-known station on the road from Flores to Belize, and the traveller's heart beats with joy when he descries it, a little white speck, glistening like a light-house, on the top of a hill. From this point a perceptible change is felt in the cli-

mate. Although the ground is but slightly elevated, it is nevertheless, sufficiently high to cause a remarkable division of the waters. Immediately in front of the hacienda diverge two streams, the Yax-hé and the San Domingo; the first named flows into the Usumasinta, and the second is a tributary of the Mopan. Neighbors, and almost twins at their birth, they run in diametrically opposite directions, one falling into the Gulf of Mexico and the other into the Bay of Honduras.

In order the better to judge of this phenomenon, and to understand the configuration of the country, I ascended an eminence near by our hacienda. From this point I perceived numberless hills, which filled up the space like the waves of a troubled sea. Towards the north and east, they were lost in the masses of forests, but towards the south they were visible as far as the eye could reach. In view of these grand solitudes, these nameless eminences scattered confusedly along the route I was to pursue, I experienced an indescribable sensation of pain, and felt the worthlessness of a country that is wanting in history and the attractions of life and industry. This reflection had saddened me during my illness at Flores, which reading a little work loaned to me by the curate. Under the title of *Tierra Santa*, this book contained extracts from all the most celebrated works relating to the Holy Land. While reading it, I forgot America, and wandered with the travellers, whose adventures it recounted, on the banks of Jordan, through the green woods of Damascus, and among the ruins of Tyre and Sodom. There the history of every hill, every stone, and even of the smallest stream, has been written in every living tongue. Until the volume was finished, it sustained a most pleasing illusion; but when I had closed it, and my thoughts returned to the actualities around me, I found myself alone, in the centre of a world without an intelligible past, and perceived that a powerful interest was wanting to my journey.

For the first time I felt discouraged. The magic of great names, with which we are familiar from infancy, lends a wondrous charm to the steps of the traveller: he forgets his fatigue on approaching celebrated places: the enthusiasm inspired by his recollections animates him, colors his recital, and communicates itself to his readers. But here there is nothing of the kind. Flores, Tenosique, even Palenque itself, and a hundred other points which I might name, exercise little or no influence on the imagination. The annals of this distant world are too casually united with our own; and besides, what do they really reveal to us through the mists of the ages which preceded the Conquest? Only that man, emerging from his savage state, had succeeded in his contest with nature, in displacing her primitive rudeness in a few favored points, without anywhere completely vindicating his supremacy.

It was almost dark when I descended from the eminence up which I had clambered, and it was with difficulty that I found my way back to the hacienda, although it was close at hand, and I had taken care to note its direction. It is by no means difficult to lose oneself in these solitudes, where the view is constantly bounded by conical eminences, which are so much alike as to be easily mistaken the one for the other.

Next morning we plunged into the labyrinth of hills which I had descried from the hacienda of Yax-hé. Some were entirely destitute of forest, and appeared like simple cones of verdure; a few bristled all over with tall trees; while others were only wooded on their flanks, as with an irregular embroidery, or supported a crown of trees on their summits. In the intermediate glades, a magnificent species of cocoa (*C. aculeata*, Plum.) towered above all the other trees. Its flowers greatly resemble those of the lilac. The atmosphere here was impregnated with the odor of decaying calabashes, which is very like that of the quince. Cattle eat this fruit with avidity. But as its shell or ligneous covering is tough

and elastic, it sometimes happens that the animal, after getting the fruit into its mouth, is equally unable to crush, swallow, or eject it. Unless the herdsman is at hand to remove it, the poor beast stands a chance of choking to death as a penalty for its greediness. I may add, that the natives prepare a kind of syrup from the pulp of the calabash, which has a high reputation as a cure for all kinds of bruises.

As we advanced, the country assumed a graver aspect. The hills increased in height, and were covered with luxuriant vegetation; their outlines became less regular and more abrupt, and the general configuration of the surface bore evidence to violent convulsions of nature in days gone by. These peculiarities continued more and more marked until we entered the great forest which extends to Dolores. The route, which, up to this point, had been easy of travel, here changed its character, and the open, grassy glades gave place to a succession of quagmires, into which our animals sank to their girths. The horses of Peten are small, but full of agility and courage, and extricate themselves very adroitly from the mud and mire. The muleteers gave themselves but little concern about the state of the road; yet as its condition was something new to me, I felt considerably disconcerted. It seemed to me as if it were impossible to proceed further. Nevertheless, as it was impracticable to turn back and equally difficult to go on foot, I consigned myself to the care of Providence, and gave my horse a free rein. Before the day was over, however, my opinion of the dangers and difficulties of the road was considerably modified for the better. But poor Morin was less philosophical, and, I think, had it been left to his choice, he would have decided in favor of canoe travel, with all of its real dangers, to proceeding on horseback. But while laughing at his perplexity and terror, my horse suddenly struck against a tree, his feet slipped from under him, and I was thrown forward into the mud. And when, on my arrival at

Dolores, I complained of the route to the governor, he consoled me by saying I had traversed it under rather favorable circumstances, and that it was only in the months of September and October that it was really bad!

Unfortunately, we were a good deal troubled by the rains, and this, with the circumstance that in travelling over such bad roads our attention was almost constantly absorbed with the precautions necessary to safety, prevented me from enjoying to the full the wonders of the vegetable kingdom in the great forest through which we passed. In no other portion of the world have I seen such fine mahogany trees, such majestic locusts, and so great a profusion of aromatic plants. We immediately recognized the pepper myrtle by the whiteness of its bark, which curls up cylindrically like that of the cinnamon tree. We also remarked a very tall tree yielding a milky, yellowish sap, somewhat bitter to the taste, which is said to be an infallible cure for wounds. It is called, at Peten, *leche Maria*, and belongs, I think, to the family of laurels.

At every step, the obstacles of the route increased; we ascended and descended alternately steep declivities rendered slippery by the rain, but nothing as yet indicated proximity to high mountains. I had fancied that the town of Dolores must be situated on an eminence. It had been described to me as intersected by running streams, with a foggy sky and pine forests; it was not in the tropical zone, nor even the temperate, but it was in a cold country, "*tierra fria*," to use the words of the inhabitants of Flores. So I naturally expected to climb some high mountain before reaching it. But as I could perceive nothing of this kind, I called to one of our muleteers: "We have been travelling now eight hours," I said, "and yet I cannot even catch a glimpse of the mountains!" "To what mountains does your worship refer?" "Why, to those around Dolores, to be sure!" "Look about you, señor, for we are already at Dolores!" And soon we

emerged from the forest, on a broad plain, sloping towards the north, and covered with houses.

But before occupying the reader with the particulars of the town of Dolores, one of the most important in the district, it may be well to refer back for a moment to the incidents connected with its foundation, in the year 1695. At this period a large portion of Vera Paz had already been reduced to subjection. The Indians, who at first had made an obstinate resistance, had gradually yielded to the adroit policy of the Spaniards, of which they did not understand the tendency. They willingly left the woods where fear had driven and retained them, to found villages, under the supervision of members of the religious orders; but the country which extended to the north of Cahabon, the provisional seat of the Dominicans, and which comprised the district around Dolores and that of the Itzaes, was then almost unknown. There resided the *Choles*, the quarrelsome and ferocious *Mopans*, the *Lacandones*, and several obscure tribes of which history only furnishes the names. Some adventurous missionaries, at the hazard of their lives, had ventured into these distant regions, but all their efforts to convert the Indians had failed.

Nevertheless, the Audiencia of Guatemala, incited by the suggestions of the crown, and strongly persuaded by the bishop, at last decided to lend its aid to the missionaries. A small army of recruits from Vera Paz was sent into the country of the Lacandones. The motives which influenced this body of men must have been powerful indeed, for the trials they underwent were almost incredible. Every step in the dense forests cost them infinite labor; every league which they accomplished was a victory achieved at the price of almost superhuman efforts. I could readily understand, in the course of my own journey, the obstacles which nature had accumulated upon their route. Many of them still exist. They advanced for a month without meeting with a human being. On Good Fri-

day the guides who accompanied them discovered the impressions of a naked foot on the ground. They followed the tracks carefully, and a little further on found a tree which had recently been cut down. On the day succeeding, they discovered a path, and on the sixth day they came to a village of a hundred huts, including three large edifices, one of which was used for religious purposes by the Indians. It was subsequently ascertained that this village belonged to the Lacandones. The inhabitants had fled from it in such haste that they had not even removed their furniture. Here were found maize, cotton, weaving machines, hatchets and other utensils of stone, besides many kinds of tamed birds. The Dominicans took possession of the temple in the name of *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores*, in commemoration of the day when the first traces of inhabitants had been met with. They constructed some defences, placed thirty soldiers on guard, and the campaign being over, the Spanish general returned to Vera Paz, leaving to the missionaries the task of completing his work. The expedition had been conducted with great moderation, and on this account the victory was unsullied by any excesses.*

* M. Morelet is mistaken in supposing that the town of Dolores which he visited is the same with that discovered by the Spaniards in 1695, and of which he gives us the history. *That* Dolores was discovered by an expedition under the command of Captain Melchor Rodriguez Mazariegos, which started from the town Gueguetenango, to the north-west of the city of Guatemala. Another expedition, under the lead of the President Barrios Leal, started at the same time from Ocosingo in Chiapas, and a third, under Don Diego de Valasco, from Cajabon, in Vera Paz. The last-named officer alone penetrated into the district traversed by M. Morelet. The operations of both Barrios and Mazariegos were confined to the region far to the westward, on the other side of the Lacantun river. From Gueguetenango the course of Mazariegos was to the north-east. He left Istatan, the position of which, to the north-east of Gueguetenango is still well known, on the 29th of February, 1695, and on the 9th of April reached the Indian town to which he gave the name of Dolores, as recited by M. Morelet. Here he was joined

Encouraged by this favorable commencement, the President of Guatemala resolved to follow up the advantages which had been obtained over the Indians, by reducing Peten. Two small armies were raised, which were to proceed from different routes and to act in concert after having gained the enemy's country. The first body of troops, having pursued the same route as on the preceding year, arrived at Dolores without meeting with any adventures, where the colony was found in a prosperous condition. The Lacandones, on returning to their dwellings, lived there as peaceably as before. The priests praised their docility, baptized them, and taught them their catechisms without the slightest opposition. After having recruited himself at this point, the head of the expedition continued his journey to the villages of *Mop* and of *Peta*, both of which have ceased to exist. They there learned that the Itzaes were a considerable people, inhabiting the banks and islands of a great lake. "After receiving this information," says the historian Juarros, "Captain Alçayaga had

by Barrios on the 19th of the same month. They made some attempts to advance further (to the *north-east* always) in the direction of the Lake of Itza, but finally contented themselves with fortifying Dolores and leaving a garrison there. This was accordingly done, and Barrios returned to Guatemala. In the year following, the attempt to reach the Lake of Itza was resumed by an expedition under the command of Don Jacabo de Alçayaga. After descending the Rio de la Pasion or Lacantun for seventy-five days without ascertaining its precise position, he returned to Dolores, and gave up the attempt. Soon after a Christian church was built in Dolores, and the Indians being quiet and docile, the town soon assumed a considerable importance. But the President Berrisope, alledging that the town was remote from the Christian settlements, and could not be safely without a garrison, the support of which was attended with great cost, ordered that it should be abandoned, and the population moved to another place, among the Christianized Indians. This was accordingly done, first to a point on the Antiquisulpa river, then to a place called San Ramon, and finally to Santa Catarina de Retaluleu—the Santa Catarana or "Ixtlavican" of modern travellers. The site of Dolores is now forgotten, but it was not within several hundred miles of the place which bears that name in the district of Peten.—T.

fifteen canoes built, and embarked in them on the great river Lacantun or Usumasinta, in order to go in quest of the famous Lake of Itza. But having sailed up and down the stream for two months without finding it, or even gleaning any new information relative to it, he abandoned the enterprise and returned to Dolores."

General Amezquita, who commanded the second corps, pursued a more direct course. After having traversed twenty-four leagues of forests, through a hostile country, he at last reached the frontier of the Itzaes. It was then that Captain Valasco, having extended his investigations to the banks of the lake, was surprised by the Indians of *Puc* and *Chata*, who massacred him and his soldiers to a man. After this catastrophe the Spanish general, desirous of avoiding the same fate, fell back upon Cahabon, from which point he informed the government of the results of his expedition. The news of these reverses singularly abated the ardor of the members of the Audiencia of Guatemala. They held a council of war, and decided, for the present, to take no further steps towards the conquest of the Itzaes. While they were thus temporizing, Don Martin de Ursua undertook to carry on the enterprise with his own resources, which he succeeded in doing, as we have seen in a preceding chapter.

Forty years since there still existed, according to Juarros, on the confines of Peten and Vera Paz, small tribes of independent Lacandones, Choles, Acalaes, and Mopans. The greater part of these Indians are now subject to the laws of the republic, but the State has gained but little accession thereby; for their territory still wears the same uncultivated aspect that it did in Ursua's day; their roads have not been improved, their wants have not become more numerous, and consequently their commerce has not been advanced, nor has their population increased. These Indians are undistinguished by any marked peculiarities from other tribes of this region,

and their very names would be forgotten did not the streams of the country also bear the same designations, and thus recall their memory.

The town of Dolores has been the most prosperous of all the other settlements in this district. Its original population of four hundred souls has been increased to thirteen hundred. The reminiscences of my sojourn here are among the most pleasing of my entire journey. True, I had just recovered my health, and the simple exercise of my physical faculties was in itself a great source of enjoyment. But besides this there were other reasons to account for my predilections in favor of Dolores. I have visited few places so rich in nature's varied productions; and I believe that, with the possible exception of San Luis, Dolores is the most interesting point for the naturalist in all Peten. Its position might be compared with that of Palenque were the horizon more extended; but the surrounding forests limit the view, and render the analogy less striking. Here the vegetable kingdom is enriched with novel elements, which give a marked character to the landscape. The eye, accustomed to tropical vegetation, gazes wonderingly upon the great forests of pines which are found here. Let no one imagine, however, that their presence always indicates a temperate climate; for the palm, the melastomas, and ligneous grasses grow equally well under the same conditions. Conifers, like those of the Island of Pines, are really tropical plants; they abound in the warm valleys following the course of the Mopan, and descend, on the southward, to the very shores of Lake Yzabal.* Dolores may, nevertheless, be considered as the intermediate point between the burning

* These are probably of the same species which are found on the island of *Guanaja*, called by Columbus the *Isla de Pinas*, when he arrived there on his fourth voyage. But this island, situated opposite Truxillo, in the Bay of Honduras, twelve leagues from the main land, must not be confounded with the ancient Evangelista, the Island of Pines of our day.

heat of the plain and the temperate atmosphere of the mountains.

The shade of the forests keeps the atmosphere saturated with moisture, which at the close of each day becomes condensed in mist. This phenomenon agreeably deceives the stranger, who, when he sees the hills and the tops of the pines enveloped in fog, immediately fancies himself in a fresh and salubrious region. After a hot day, the density of the vapor which settles down on the land is so great, that at a distance of twenty-five paces no object can be distinguished. This constant dampness is not altogether conducive to health. Children here are very delicate, and few persons attain to a great age. Pulmonary complaints are common; and there is no point in the whole extent of the *tierra caliente* where man's health is more in jeopardy, particularly if he be a native of a sunnier clime. The country is pestilential, particularly in the neighborhood of water courses. The fertile, wooded plains, also, are full of mould, and are the seats of low, bilious fevers. The dryer regions are ravaged by diarrhœa, while the moderately elevated grounds, exposed to great variations of temperature, are subject to the different forms of pneumonia. I found that the thermometer, towards the end of July, ranged in Dolores from 57 to 73 degrees of Fahrenheit. At six in the morning, I was shivering in my hammock from cold, while at midday, I was completely overcome by the heat. Nevertheless, man might in time accommodate himself in some measure to these changes; but unfortunately he is too anxious to reap an immediate reward for his labors, and hence the plans of colonization which in our time have been attempted in tropical America, have proved such melancholy failures.

Many streams rise in the hills of Dolores, and meander from meadow to meadow, and finally unite in a single stream that falls into the Rio Mopan. These waters are fresh and cool compared with those of the lower savannas. They flow

over beds of gravel, and their murmur pleasantly salutes the ear. I can readily comprehend the delight of the inhabitant of Flores, when he leaves the burning shores of the lake, and ascends to these relatively high and refreshing elevations. The name of *tierra fria*, which he bestows upon them, explains his notions concerning them with more of emphasis than truth. Doubtless, the climate of Dolores might be improved, and the density of its fogs diminished, by thinning out the forests; but this transformation might be productive of other inconveniences. Besides, the retired position of the place has its charms for the Indian, who does not like to cultivate the soil in face of the world. Jealous of his independence, and always concerned for the safety of what he possesses, he retreats before civilization, and strives to conceal the results of his industry or skill in the heart of the forest. One sees with surprise that the lands around his villages are always uncultivated, and wonders where are the fields whence he draws his supply of provisions. These are often leagues away, in secluded and unknown localities; and should their owner conceive that they have in any degree diminished in fertility, or should he be disturbed in their possession, he does not hesitate to abandon them, and seek out a new and more secure place for his plantation. This unsocial disposition of the Indians became more and more manifest to us as we proceeded beyond Dolores, where the country is almost exclusively peopled by the aborigines of unmixed blood.

Among the productions of the running streams of Dolores and its neighborhood is a small fish, a variety of carp, of a delicate azure color. Its dorsal fin is beautifully indented, almost transparent, and dotted with orange. The under lobe of the tail is a bright yellow, striped with black, and is prolonged in a thread equal in length with the whole body. In a word, it is equally remarkable for the singularity of its shape and for the vivacity of its colors. Villagutierre mentions an-

other fish, called *chillan*, in the *Chole* dialect. It still bears this name at Dolores among the Indians; but the Spaniards, who are not particular about names, call it *sardina*. It belongs to the salmonoides.

Transferring ourselves from the banks of the streams into the damp and shaded gardens of Dolores, we meet with a very curious animal, the *triton*, which, before the period of my travels, was considered as the type of a peculiar species; but there still existed doubts as to the existence of the organic characteristics attributed to it. The specimens which I obtained, while confirming the exactitude of former observations, definitively prove it to belong to the species of *œdipus* of Tschudi. Like the salamander, this batracian is exceedingly slow in its movements; it walks by alternately moving one fore foot and then the corresponding hind one.*

The country seemed to me to abound in fruit trees. Besides the sapote, the guava, the mamay, the cacao, and many other less interesting trees, there is a species of anona called by the Indians *pochté*, the fruit of which ripens in May, and is more delicious in taste than any of those which I have yet mentioned. We also saw some fine *avocates* growing wild in the forests. This is a pulpy fruit, with a thin, smooth, leathery skin, of a green color, spotted with red, resembling much the large pears of our own country. It contains a large oval stone, which, when the fruit ripens, becomes loose and rattles in its centre. It is then fit for eating. The pulp is of a delicate coffee color, unctuous, without odor, resembling fresh butter, and is eaten with a spoon. Utterly unlike any

* The *œdipus platydactylus* frequently changes color, but in accordance with a law which appeared to me to be general. At one time the animal appears ornamented with three bands of pale rose on a chocolate ground, more or less interrupted, extending to the root of the tail. At another time the chocolate color predominates, and the rose becomes secondary. The skin of the animal is soft like satin.

of our own, this fruit at first is rarely palatable to the stranger. He is apt to regard it as insipid; nevertheless, to a refined taste, it finally recommends itself, by its wonderfully delicate, agreeable and peculiar flavor. At least I grew to esteem it more highly than any other fruit of the country. Dogs, and even the alligators are very fond of it, which probably accounts for the name of *alligator pear* which has been bestowed upon it by the English. Its leaves are employed medicinally by the natives.

During an excursion which I made from Dolores to the source of the Mopan, in company with the governor of the place, we met with another species of the *avocate*. It differed from that before described by the contraction of the part nearest the stem, by its sharp conic base, by its thick, wrinkled skin of a light green color, and by the tenacity with which the skin adheres to the pulp. The Indians call this variety *omtchon*.

A third species grows in the forests of the high grounds of Peten. We met with it in going from Dolores to *Poptun*. It is not as highly esteemed as the other varieties. It has a very strong, peculiar flavor, from which it derives the name of *anison*.

During our excursion, the governor mentioned to us a flower called *flor de la calentura*, or fever flower, because it gives out, at certain hours of the day, a sensible quantity of caloric. Some thirty years since this remarkable characteristic was observed among various classes of plants at the moment of fecundation, but particularly in the *caladium pinnatifidum*. The discovery, however, was only made through the aid of the most delicate instruments. The Indians made the same discovery without having recourse to the thermometer, which shows that the phenomenon must have been sufficiently striking and remarkable to have arrested their attention through the organs of touch. By the sad law of compensations,

death soon follows this acceleration of life in the flower of *la calentura*. We searched among the myriads of parasitic plants which here covered the tree trunks for a specimen of this extraordinary flower, but in vain.

We left Dolores without ever wearying of its wild picturesqueness, its pines, its fogs, and the wonderful air of peace and quiet which is the predominant characteristic of the country. The greater part of its inhabitants, who have never journeyed out of sight of its green and waving tree tops, consider that all the world is concentrated in this little tract of country; they cannot conceive that there are lands where the bananna does not grow, where man labors without being driven to do so by necessity, where his wants are innumerable, his pleasures infinite, where study opens a great world to his intelligence, which it develops and fosters; but also where, as if to compensate for all these advantages, his peace of soul and heart are perilled and often lost. The total want of energy, activity, and forethought, which I have already pointed out as characterizing the people at Flores, applies to the inhabitants throughout all Peten. It is the land of forgetfulness and indifference, but I am not prepared to say of happiness.

I mentioned in the preceding chapter the scarcity of grain which occurred in the district at the time of my visit. This circumstance hastened my departure from Dolores, for the resources of the place were diminishing daily. There are no butchers in the Indian villages, and consequently no regular supply of meats. The owners of cattle slaughter them only when they are in want of money. When the animal is cut up, the purchaser goes to the place and makes his selection of a portion of the flesh, which is cut in strips, salted, and dried in the sun. At Dolores, which has a population of over thirteen hundred souls, two bullocks only are consumed in a month. Unfortunately no cattle were killed during our so-

journ. Fowls and eggs were scarce, and there were few, if any, vegetables. Different varieties of peppers, anotta, calabashes, and a species of mint called *yerba buena*, were the only plants which I saw cultivated for domestic purposes. We were reduced to the necessity of eating macaws, which we shot among the neighboring pines, and the cabbages of the palm trees brought to us from the forest. Poor Morin did his best with these limited culinary materials. He varied his mode of seasoning and preparing them, but all his efforts were in vain; the vegetables preserved their bitterness of taste, and the flesh of the birds, in spite of his care, was none the less dry and stringy.

Towards the end of July we left Dolores, and set out, under the escort of the governor, for the village of Poptun. This journey furnished me with another opportunity for admiring the sagacity of the mule, and its cautious mode of proceeding over bad roads. The mule never takes a single step without first having, as it were, felt her way. She does not mechanically follow the animal preceding her, and never loses her "presence of mind" like the horse, which, in time of danger, only thinks of escaping by the shortest path. On the contrary, if the mule sees difficulties before her, she hesitates, halts and deliberates, then decides on her course, and generally determines wisely. Preferring the borders of the road, where she finds a firmer footing, she gives herself but little uneasiness concerning her rider, who must himself avoid striking against overhanging trees and projecting rocks. That is none of her concern. "Every one for himself," is her motto, practically exemplified.

At noon we stopped to rest under the shadows of a forest of palm trees, made up of many varieties. A species of *lycopode*, with trailing stems, covered the ground with a delicate velvet-like carpet. In the midst of this beautiful verdure were hundreds of slender stipes, armed with thorns,

from which depended quantities of the fruit, itself also covered with prickles. The corypha palm, with its rigid trunk, towered majestically above all the others, which seemed to bow to its superior height. Everywhere new stalks shot up their leaves, which bent over our heads like gigantic parasols. The governor of Dolores called our attention to the *jalacte.* Its foliage resembles that of the reed, and its young bark, if scratched with some sharp instrument, becomes black on exposure to the air. It is said that a Spanish leader took advantage of this circumstance, when placed in a critical position, by tracing on its bark with the point of his sword, the instructions to his followers which he desired should escape the observation of his enemies.

Every object rivets the attention under these magnificent domes of verdure; every object around the traveller awakens the deepest interest in his breast. The myriads of parasitic plants, which here meet under his eye, in the shadow of these forests, are as brilliant and fragrant as if they had the full enjoyment of sun and air. The most remarkable among them is an orchidæ, the flower of which is shaped like a lily, of the purest white, spotted with pink, which gives out a strong odor of benjamin; (*stanhopea.*) These fragrant emanations attract numberless butterflies, of graceful shapes, with variegated wings as transparent as crystal, but nearly all of the family of *heliconides.*

As we advanced through the forests we came upon enormous calcareous blocks, which looked like so many pedestals, supporting sapote, laurel and mahogany trees of most imposing altitudes. It was by this interesting and picturesque route that we reached the banks of the Machaquilan river. We were ignorant as to the practicability of the ford. Like all rivers, taking their rise among the mountains, it often swells suddenly, and in the course of a few hours becomes an overwhelming torrent. The traveller finds nothing but a

ricketty raft on the banks, and he must either embark on it, and trust himself to the mercy of the rushing waters, or else encamp under some spreading tree and await patiently the subsidence of the stream. Many persons have lost their lives here; but we were not, however, obliged to risk our own, for the river was at low stage, and quietly flowing in its natural bed. The Machaquilan, and all the streams which succeed it, flow into the Usumasinta, and no longer towards the Gulf of Honduras.

As soon as we had crossed the river, the country began to assume an entirely different aspect. We entered a new region, characterized by alternate clumps of pines and open savannas. It was a broad, level plain, and the groups of trees took various, but always beautiful forms. Sometimes they formed pyramidal piles of verdure, and again they were grouped together like gigantic bouquets. The pines were of larger size than any we had yet encountered, frequently attaining a height of one hundred and fifty feet. They were, in fact, the tallest which I found in America. The natives recognize two varieties, both tri-foliate, but differing in color and in the density of their wood; nevertheless, they are closely allied in fruits and foliage, as well as in their general exterior characteristics. The wood of the *pino colorado*, or red pine, as indicated by its name, is reddish in color, dense, and so full of resin that it is semi-transparent; while that of the *pino blanco*, or white pine, is of a lighter yellow, with finer fibres, more brittle, and less resinous. Both varieties differ from the pines of Cuba; but, on the other hand, they closely resemble those of the table lands of Mexico.

At a distance of half a league from Poptun, the savannas increase in size, the hills become lower, and the clumps of trees less numerous but more compact, and made up exclusively of pines. Nothing now seems to conform with one's general ideas of a tropical landscape; the traveller fancies himself

transported to the plains of the north-east of Europe, instead of being in the very heart of America. It was evening before we caught sight of the white houses of Poptun. The clouds were settling down darkly on the woods, and the fresh breeze whistled through the trees, sounding like the ebbing of the distant sea. This murmur fell pleasantly on my ear, recalling memories of other days and other scenes.

Poptun can scarcely be called a village; it is only an isolated settlement, occupying one of the most delightful sites that I ever visited. Every day of our stay there, I ascended at sundown a neighboring eminence to enjoy the deliciously cool atmosphere. The view, perhaps, attracted me equally with the breeze; for, from this height, the whole extent of the plain could be seen, covered with groves of pines and conical green hills of perfect regularity. A quarter of a league distant, was visible a great zone of hills, piled up towards the north, while to the southward the tops of the pines undulated, like an emerald sea, to the uttermost limits of the horizon.

The extent of the forest in this direction is not known, but it is supposed that it falls away gently to the Gulf of Honduras. I proposed to the governor of San Luis, of whom I was the guest, to make an exploration of its recesses. At first he was delighted with the idea; but when the time for its execution arrived, he sought to discourage me by enumerating the thousand difficulties of the enterprise. This question of the accessibility of the Bay of Honduras, by this route, is by no means devoid of interest for the people of Peten, who may some day find here the means of communication with the sea, and an outlet for their productions, of which they stand so much in need.

The climate of Poptun and that of Dolores are very similar. During the day the temperature is almost as high as anywhere under the torrid zone, while towards evening the air becomes cool and damp from the fogs. The soil is saturated with

water, which is found at the depth of six feet, and gives to the prairies the brightness and freshness of perpetual youth. The pines here grow rapidly, and during the first year attain the height of a yard. But the maize, retarded in growth by the dampness, does not ripen before the fifth month, and the cane does not come to maturity until the tenth, instead of the eighth month, which still farther explains the term, *tierra fria*, by which this table land is known to the inhabitants of the lower portions of the country.

We left this wild spot one gloomy morning, which presaged a dull and dreary day. Our host insisted on accompanying us. He silenced our polite objections by explaining that he had business to attend to in San Luis; and he did, in fact, make a good thing of his visit, for he took a cow with him, which cost eight dollars, and killed her there, realizing thirty by the sale!

We had not proceeded far from Poptun, before we were overtaken by an overwhelming storm. Our road ran through a deep and rocky ravine, into which the water poured from every side, while our ears were stunned by the peals of thunder, and our eyes blinded by the lightning. In the midst of this wild commotion of the elements our mules took fright and broke away, scattering our baggage in all directions. It is impossible to conceive a scene of more fearful confusion, in which our intelligence and strength were equally impotent and unavailing. Fortunately the tempest was of short duration; but it lasted long enough to fill the ravine nearly breast deep with a turbulent stream of muddy water. I mention this incident as an illustration of the experiences for which the traveller in tropical America must always be prepared.

Emerging finally from the ravine, I was agreeably surprised in recognizing, among the dripping branches over our heads, the delicate foliage of the arborescent or tree fern, which now, for the first time, met my view. During the

afternoon we travelled over a tract of low, marshy ground, obstructed by bamboos, where we were vehemently assailed by swarms of mosquitos; but finally, after eleven hours of travel, wet and weary, we reached the village of San Luis, a little before sunset.

"You see the country which I govern," said the corregidor, as we approached; "fortunately I am not obliged to reside in it." On an elevated piece of ground, broken by ravines and covered with bushes, stood a cluster of squalid huts. A few persons, seated on the ground near these wretched dwellings, silently watched us as we passed. An immense forest, in the form of an amphitheatre, surrounded the village, and extended to the jagged line of the sierras which bounded the horizon. Never had the forest worn to me so stern an aspect. Toward the west, a narrow path, cut through the vegetation, leading toward a depression in the mountains, indicated the route to Guatemala. It was shaded by palm trees, between which the rays of the setting sun streamed in a golden shower. I comprehended, from the profound isolation and the wild character of the country, the regrets of the governor on being obliged to exchange, for ever so brief a period, the breezy plains, the smiling hills, and sighing pines of Poptun for this savage spot. The Indians of San Luis, however, do not appear to share his prejudices. Numerous efforts have been made to get them to reside on lower and more cultivable grounds, where they might devote themselves profitably to agriculture, but in vain. At Poptun they are subject to some slight restraints, while in the midst of the forests of San Luis no one watches their conduct, interferes with their tastes, or attempts to control their actions. They get drunk at will, and labor when they please; in a word, they are perfectly unrestrained, and are happy, if we may judge from their cheerfulness and their disinclination for change.

I have observed that the Indians, when living apart, are

much more cheerful than when mixing with the whites, whose wants they soon acquire; yet their moral enjoyments are very limited, and those of their animal existence are extremely few. The Indians of San Luis are scantily clad, scarcely sheltered from the elements, and miserably fed, yet they are content. They might raise cattle, but this would cost too great an effort. Maize and beans which only require to be planted, the bananna which needs no cultivation, and the cabbage of the palms which abound in the forests, constitute all their alimentary resources. Their commerce with the district at large consists of a small quantity of tobacco which they plant in their *milpas*,* and the cacao which they gather in the forests. The cacao trees rarely grow separately; the grains which escape the avidity of the Indians and the active beaks of the parroquets,† germinate around the feet of old trees, and form little plantations which belong to whoever finds them, by virtue of discovery. This title is quite sufficient, and not only is it respected, but the rights which it confers are handed down from father to son through a series of generations. The cacao of San Luis is very highly valued in Peten. When the season to gather it arrives, every one makes preparations for a journey of from seven to eight days, as the case may be, to these natural plantations in the forest. At such times the Indians manifest great activity, and bring into play faculties and resources unknown to the white man.

Once a year, the curate from Dolores comes to San Luis to say mass, baptize the children, and to consecrate the unions which have been formed in the interval. The pastor's indul-

* Fields prepared for the cultivation of maize.

† The parroquets are extremely fond of the seeds or beans of the cacao. Among the documents relative to the conquest of Mexico, will be found the curious complaints of the chiefs of Atitlan (Guatemala) to the king, enumerating, among other grievances, that for want of slaves to watch over their plantations, their harvest of cacao had been devoured by parrots.—*Terneaux-Compans, Mem. Orig.*, p. 423.

gence is always proportionate to the difficulties of the case. As to the Indians themselves, they attach little importance to the sacrament, and care only for the ceremony of marriage in its simplest form.

We suffered much in San Luis from its peculiar climate, which is strangely made up of heat and moisture. The atmosphere is heavy, stagnant, and saturated with miasma, which the constitution of a stranger cannot long resist.

We were lodged in the *cabildo*, or house of the municipality, a wretched hovel, which we were obliged to share with a dozen half-naked Indians, who were often drunk, and always noisy. We learned from them that they were for the time being in the public employ, and represented the figurative sword of justice, during the visit of the governor, who holds its scales. As this magistrate rarely comes to San Luis, his time while there is quite as much taken up as is that of the curate. From morning until night, seated between his two alcaldes, his face wore the conventional gravity appropriate to a judge, and he pronounced his judgments with an emphasis and solemnity that would do credit to the highest tribunals of the world. His Indian acolytes, meanwhile, neither moved nor spoke, but held their great silver-headed canes, their insignia of office, to their noses as steadily and firmly as if they had been cast in bronze, and the executors of the law, or "the public strength," sprawled on the ground or snored under the table, in a state of far-gone booziness, while a mixed assemblage of swarthy spectators, with unshorn locks and scanty clothing, thronged around the door, nearly filling up that only avenue for the entrance of light and air. The first case, before this distinguished tribunal, was one in which a woman and an old man were the contestants, and plead their own cases. It is truly astonishing with what a gift of language the Indians generally are endowed! They enter into debates with the most imperturbable assurance and without the least hesita-

tion, scarcely giving themselves time to take breath between their sentences. But what is scarcely less remarkable, is the coolness and patience which they display in listening to the replies of their adversaries. I have frequently regretted that I could not myself judge of their eloquence, and that I was obliged to take it for granted that they exchanged many words, and but few ideas. Being unacquainted with their language I had to content myself with the governor's laconic interpretation of their speeches. He informed me that the woman was the plaintiff, and that she accused the old man of having bewitched her husband. The case had commenced before I was up in the morning, and after listening to the debate for an hour or two in my hammock, I got tired of my position, and naturally desired to quit it, but was restrained from doing so by the scantiness of my clothing. At last, however, as the case did not appear to be coming to an end, I decided on getting up at any hazard, and accordingly jumped to the ground, and put on my most indispensable article of dress as hastily as possible; but I might have spared myself any excess of modesty, for the audience did not seem to be in the slightest degree surprised at the spectacle of my toilet. It was an entertainment which they enjoyed gratuitously during the whole period of my sojourn in San Luis. The arrival here of a stranger, particularly if he be a white man, is of such rare occurrence as to excite general interest; nor can we feel astonished that it is so. Have we not all often manifested a curiosity as frivolous and impertinent as that of these children of the desert, without having an excuse as legitimate as theirs? This question, which I frequently asked myself, rendered me indulgent toward the poor Indians.

San Luis is a paradise for the conchologist. How many hours I passed in the neighboring forests, searching for rare shells in the crevices of the rocks, lifting one by one the dead leaves, peering under mossy stones, beneath pieces of old bark,

alternately full of expectation, surprise, or joy, and crowding more emotions into a single day, than are contained in whole years of ordinary life! How little did I then think of privations, of fatigue, of the dangers of the climate, or of the reptiles which abound in the forests! None but the naturalist can enter into these mysterious joys, and comprehend that, at any cost, they are not dearly bought. What, it may be asked, is the secret of so lively an interest? If the end to be attained were only of a higher order! But these infinite little creatures of the lowest rank in creation—can they be worthy of such interest, and can their discovery justify such transports of delight? I can only say, in reply, that nothing in nature is unworthy of attention, and that nothing should be despised, for nothing stands alone. And I must add, with Hobbes, that "God is not less great in the minutest of his works than in the immensity of the universe; that the study of the simplest little insect is a subject prolific of the most elevated thoughts, and that pursuit of science rests the spirit wearied with the bitter agitations of the world, by opening to it an infinite sphere, calmer and happier than that in which human interests are debated." I have the right thus to express myself, without being accused of an exaggerated enthusiasm, since I only became a naturalist after having learned these truths.

Venomous reptiles are by no means rare in the forests of San Luis. They inspire the Indians with the greatest terror, since they are ignorant of any antidote for their bite. I myself killed a fine trigonocephalus, which we found sleeping under the shadow of a rock. The Indian by whom I was accompanied first caught sight of it, but I could not induce him to approach it. A few days after we captured a boa alive. On this occasion, the animal not being venomous, my guide betrayed considerable courage, seizing hold of the serpent without the slightest hesitation. The tenacity of life of these great

ophidians is almost incredible. The trigonocephalus to which I have alluded above, endeavored to bite even after his head was severed from his body. The *croatalus horridus* furnished me with a still more striking example of this diffusion of life in the most distant parts of the body. We had caught one of these reptiles, and it had been dead, apparently, for several hours, and we had hung it up for the purpose of skinning it. Morin, who performed this operation, commenced by separating the head from the back bone, after which he undertook to strip off the skin, when the reptile suddenly threw up its tail and wound it closely around his arm. The same vitality was also manifested in the upper portion of its body; nay more, after its miserable trunk was entirely divested of skin it seemed to be as full of life as ever, for on Morin's throwing it to the ground, it twisted itself about for several minutes. This fact will not appear remarkable to naturalists, who are familiar with the wonderful degree in which muscular irritability is developed in reptiles.

In addition to the natural fear which venomous reptiles inspire in the minds of the Indians, they also entertain various ridiculous prejudices which do not tell very favorably for their judgment. The Spaniards themselves, living among this ignorant population, have ended by imbibing many of their absurdest notions. The governor of San Luis, for instance, informed us that the bite of a species of lizard, called *scorpion* in the country, was as much to be dreaded as that of the rattlesnake.* According to his account, it is perfectly incurable; no human power can save the life of the person bitten; and he went on to relate a number of tragic instances, with the minutest details, in proof of his assertion, all of which were corroborated unanimously by his listeners. Of

* The name of *scorpion* is also applied in South Carolina to a lizard of a different species, which appears to be an *anolis*.—*Bartram's Travels*, p. 299.

course this aroused my curiosity to the highest pitch, so I offered a large price for one of these reptiles, and determined not to leave San Luis without one. Two days after this we were informed that a *scorpion* had been seen in the church. I was absent, so Morin undertook its capture, and to him was awarded all the glory of the undertaking. He was as well aware as myself that lizards are not venomous, but the Indians were full of admiration of his daring, when, placing himself at their head, he directed his steps to the sacred retreat of the *scorpion*. On entering the building, one of the boldest of the party pointed out, upon the wall, the object which had excited such horror. It proved to be nothing more than a lizard of the *geckotian* family, hideously ugly, but, in common with all of his kind, perfectly harmless. Morin, without the least hesitation, seized it by the neck, and held it up to the astonished gaze of the Indians. The news of this exploit produced a profound sensation in the village, and every one had his comments to make on the occurrence. All, however, finally came to the conclusion that the boldness and courage of Morin were due to some secret antidote which he carried about with him. The governor received our explanations with an incredulous smile. In a word, we did not succeed in freeing the inhabitants of San Luis from their prejudice. It remained, in spite of all our explanations and efforts, as deeply rooted as before our arrival.*

* This saurian has recently been described in the catalogue of the Museum, after the specimen presented by myself, under the name of *gymnondactylus scapularis*, Dum. The *gecko*, which frequents old walls, inspires the same disgust and ill-founded fears in the central parts of Europe.

VIII.

ADVENTURE IN THE FOREST.

Indian porters—How they are secured—A drunken revel—Departure from San Luis—Order of march—Arrangements for the night—Our Indian guides—Their character and habits—Character of the country—Night in the forest—Bad roads—Remarkable vegetation—Rio Santa Isabel—The peccary—Nativé provisions for travel—Costume for wet weather—Sagacity of the boa—The wood partridge—Rancho of *Chichac*—Native physicians—Primitive lancets—Gloomy forests—Absence of life—Footprints of the Lacandones—Night in a cavern—Dry bed of a lake—Station of *Campamac*—Difficult ascents—Rio *Chimuchuch*—Natural bridge—An encounter—Sinister visitors—Apprehensions—Desertion of guides—Consultations—The interpreter found—Diplomacy—Recovery of guides—Rejoicings—Resumption of journey—The summit of *Leagua*—Magnificent prospect—Distant view of Cahabon—Descent into the plain—Town of Cahabon—The cura—Housed in the convent.

THE difficulties of the route between San Luis and Cahabon are so great as to render it impassable for horses and mules. Fifty leagues of forest separate these two villages, the one the last in Peten and the other the first in Vera Paz. The journey, during the dry season, may be made in ten days, and as transportation can only be effected on the backs of porters, the traveller has before him the humiliating spectacle of man reduced to a beast of burthen. The Indians, especially those of the central provinces, are accustomed to this kind of labor, which their fathers pursued before them from time immemorial, and they not only carry merchandise and the baggage of travellers, but travellers themselves, by means of a kind of chair suspended between their shoulders. It can readily be conceived that this mode of riding is far from agreeable, not to speak of the reluctance which every one must feel in thus tasking the powers of a fellow-being, and I therefore declined the porters who were offered to me by the governor of San Luis, notwithstanding that we were all, at that moment,

in a very sorry condition for travelling on foot, Morin was affected by fever; Fido limped on three legs; and as for myself, I had the best of reasons for distrusting my physical powers.

Don Luis, the corregidor, undertook to provide us with an escort of the most reliable men of the country, and I must confess to some surprise, on the evening preceding our departure, when I saw two of those engaged for my service conducted to the prison of the town; nor was my surprise diminished when a third surrendered himself voluntarily to the jailor. Much troubled by this circumstance, I hurried off to obtain an explanation, when I was told that it was customary, as a measure of discipline, and to prevent men who had accepted service and received part payment in advance, from getting drunk and forgetting their obligations, as they would be very apt to do, if left to their liberty. "You can see," said Don Luis, "that they themselves recognize the utility of this precaution, from the good grace with which they submit to it;" and he pointed out to me one of his own servants on his way to surrender himself to the jailor. Morin had engaged him as interpreter, on the recommendation of the governor himself, but this did not prevent us from locking him up with the others until the next morning.

We completed our preparations for departure over night, with all the security inspired by these sage precautions, but when morning arrived, two of our guides were missing. Morin had unluckily neglected to lock them up with the others; and they had hidden themselves away so effectually that they could not now be found. To add to our embarrassments, we found that the governor had already started for Poptun, and we were thus left to support our own interests, as best we might, with his two alcaldes, neither of whom understood a word of Spanish. The moment the governor left, the entire population, which during the five days of his visit had pre-

served a rigorous sobriety, broke out in a grand carousal. Men, women and children, old men, guards and prisoners, all were drunk before the close of the day, and staggered shouting, singing and babbling in confused chorus through the village. The spectacle of a crowd deprived of reason was in no small degree alarming, and in view of the possibility of their getting it into their heads to take off those of the strangers, it became a pregnant question with us how to get away. By a happy accident, in the midst of our distress, the courier from Guatemala, accompanied by three Cahabon Indians, reached the village, where he was to pass the night. He took an interest in our situation, and gave us some advice by which I did not fail to profit. Sending for the first alcalde, I gave him a rough admonition, talked large about the corregidor, and wound up by telling him that unless my missing guides were forthcoming, I should engage the escort of the courier, at his expense, and proceed without them. This threat, and the high tone which I assumed, had a better effect than I had anticipated. The alcalde, who fortunately was new in office, not only made the most humble apologies, but also promised that everything should be arranged to my satisfaction, and I must add that he kept his word. The courier never travels alone between Cahabon and San Luis; nor do the Indians themselves venture to traverse the solitary waste except in parties of greater or less numbers, in order to render the mutual support which the difficulties of the route make necessary. But the road from San Luis to Peten is without danger, and I therefore could take away the escort of the courier without compromising the safety of his dispatches.

Night relieved us of most of the drunken villagers who had invaded our domicil, and Morin got rid of the rest by tumbling them unceremoniously into the street. They offered no resistance, but slept quietly in the places where they happened to fall, and there they remained, when the sun rose on

the field of battle, in postures more various than graceful. At dawn the prison doors were opened, and our *compagnons de voyage* made their appearance one by one, in the broad daylight. The charge for keeping them having been settled the day before, each man had only to pick out his own followers and take them off.

Notwithstanding their puny appearance, the Indians of San Luis find no difficulty in carrying heavy loads of four *arrobas*, one hundred pounds, for long distances over the worst of roads. These are supported between the shoulders by a wide band, which passes around the forehead in such a position that the greater part of the weight rests on the cervical muscles and spinal column. These portions of the frame are remarkably developed among the mountaineers of Central America, probably from long exercise, to the degree of hereditary perpetuation. I had engaged seven of these men in my service; three for my collections in natural history, two for my baggage, and one to carry the hammocks and camp equipage, while the seventh, like Esop, was loaded with provisions—that is to say, our *tortillas*, a little salt meat, some coarse sugar, and a dozen green banannas. This was all that we could procure in San Luis. Our Indians, on their part, supplied themselves with a little ground maize, some beans, and a small quantity of peppers and salt, depending on the accidents of the journey for what they might require in addition. And here I may observe, that whatever may be the fondness of the Indians for spirits, they never take any with them on these journeys, where a single lapse from sobriety and caution might cost them their lives. The pay of the men was moderate, only three dollars from San Luis to Cahabon, equal to but about thirty cents per day, out of which they were to provision themselves for going and returning.

The moment of departure finally came, and our little caravan was put in motion. Naked to their waists, each

with a *macheté* in his right hand, and a *petaté*, or kind of mat made from palm leaves, rolled in military style under his left arm, our porters presented a most picturesque spectacle as they defiled before us in the road descending from the village into the forest. Their relatives and friends, grouped by the wayside, shouted their adieus, and as we passed their huts offered us refreshments, and sped us on our journey with the most exaggerated good wishes. The whole population, in fact, seemed to be animated by the most expansive sentiments of benevolence, and the demonstration altogether might have been touching, had not the breath of some of the more affectionate among them betrayed the unpleasant fact that, notwithstanding the early hour, they were already drunk!

The courier had advised us to keep an eye on our guides, not because the Indians of San Luis were worse than others, nor because we need apprehend any violence; but he could not be responsible for their fidelity, and believed them quite capable of abandoning us, and carrying off our effects. We therefore arranged, Morin and I, to establish on the first day a regular system of discipline, one taking the lead and the other bringing up the rear, so that no movement of our swarthy friends could escape our observation. During the night, Fida, in her turn, acted the part of a sentinel. She seemed quite to comprehend our apprehensions, and allowed none of our followers to quit their hammocks without alarming the encampment. It was in vain that they sought to conciliate her with caresses, and equally in vain did they divide with her their scanty fare. She accepted both without scruple, but never reciprocated their favors with any recognition, however slight. With Morin and myself, it was quite different, but even here she made a distinction—on what based I do not know, except on the notion that whoever dispensed the provisions must be master.

Nothing occurred to diversify our first day's journey, ex-

cept a vigorous assault by a detachment of little black wasps whose nest we happened to disturb, and who made us pay dearly for our inadvertence. Both Morin and myself received stings on our eyelids, which resulted in a painful inflammation, lasting for two days. Another incident was the finding of some eggs of the *hocco*. They were of the most magnificent blue. Before sunset we reached the first *rancho* or camping ground. Thanks to the public spirit of our friend the corregidor, similar buildings were disposed at convenient distances, generally on the banks of some brook, on all the roads within the district under his charge. The first care of our guides, after depositing their loads, was to light a fire, and then suspend their hammocks between the posts supporting the roof of the *rancho*, so as completely to surround the building.

This done, they procured water, ate their frugal meals, rolled up and lighted a rude cigar, and then started out in the woods in search of honey, wild fruits, and shell-fish from the streams, as a means of eking out their scanty supplies of provisions. Each one took his turn in preparing the food of the party, distributing it equally without regard to the amount contributed by the various members. The same impartiality was carried out in respect of any fruit or game that happened to fall in their way. Their cooking implements were limited to an earthen pot or two for general use, and a calabash for each person. They ate and drank like animals, without regard to time or place. Whenever we stopped to rest, they invariably commenced rumaging in the common receptacle for a *tortilla*, a handful of maize, or some article of food; and they rarely passed a stream without stopping to drink. Whenever they had fire they invariably heated their beverages, by which they more effectually assuaged the thirst, which in these hot countries is inextinguishable. They were never in a hurry to leave in the morning, inasmuch as they

regarded the action of the sun as necessary to the purification of the stagnant air of the forest at that hour. Docile with their masters, they are always ready to render them every service in their power, so long as they are treated kindly. At any rate, I found them at Peten, and throughout Vera Paz, always alert and good-humored. They appeared to live together in the most fraternal union, without a shadow on the general concord. Simple-minded as well as ignorant, they sometimes interrogated me concerning my country, the value there of maize, and the abundance of cacao in the forests. What most confounded them was the distance at which I represented it to be, and I sought in vain to make them comprehend it by adopting the only standard of measurement with which they are acquainted, that is to say, a day's journey. As may be supposed, calculating seven leagues as equivalent to a day, the distance appeared to them almost fabulous.

Our first night was signalized by a terrific thunder storm, which left the road for the following day in a state surpassing description. It was only a succession of slippery declivities, deep mud-holes and rugged ravines, rendering it dangerous for us to lift our eyes from the ground before us. Notwithstanding all of our precautions, we reached the rancho of *Tzunkal* covered with bruises and plastered over with mud. Morin had lost one of his shoes, and Fida limped worse than before, while, for my own part, I was what the Americans call "used up." We were in some degree consoled under our misfortunes by a *hocco* which we succeeded in shooting, of which the flesh afforded us a delicious soup.

But in spite of all the little annoyances attending this mode of travelling, I always recall with pleasure the details and incidents of our marches and encampments in the forest. With what satisfaction we removed our damp and uncomfortable garments, bathed in the clear streams, and prepared our

evening meal when we reached the hospitable *rancho!* If the sun was still up I permitted myself only a few moments of repose, and then took my gun to explore the adjacent wilds, in the constantly sustaining hope of obtaining some new plant or animal to swell the conquests of science; and when night came on, reclining voluptuously in my hammock, I enjoyed to the full that sweet sense of quietude and profound content which only a close communion with nature can inspire. The events of the day would pass in review through my mind, without, however, preventing me from taking in every detail of the little scene that was passing under my eyes.

Morin always prepared supper with the cool deliberation of an old sailor, while Fida, attracted to his side by the fragrant odors of the cookery, watched all of his movements with the deepest solicitude, never bestowing a look on our dusky companions, grouped around a fire of their own, and intent on the contents of the great earthen pot which I have already described, and which, perched on the shoulders of the most stalwart of our guides, always formed the most conspicuous object in our little procession. Gradually the thousand voices of the night would commence their mystic utterances, and the infinite varieties of beings which people the woods begin to make known their existence, filling the air with a confused but harmonious murmur. Among all the sounds, however, but one cry alone, that of the *faisan del monte*, or indigenous partridge, seemed articulate, and this is so like that of a human being in distress, that the most experienced traveller cannot hear it except with a shudder. When the night was clear and the sky cloudless, the light of the moon fell in broad sheets between the trees, detaching the long, pendant vines, the great indented leaves, and the glistening trunks and branches from the dark background of the forest, and causing them to stand out in high relief, like the apparitions of a dream. Nor was the scene less remarkable and striking when

cloud and storm settled down on our encampment, and enveloped us in their electric masses. Then all life was hushed, and a solemn silence reigned in the gloomy solitudes, so intense and oppressive, that we experienced a sense of relief when the great trees began to bend under the tread of the tempest, and the gloomy vistas around us to light up, even though momentarily, under the fitful gleams of the lightning. At such times, it is true, our own helplessness, and the overwhelming majesty of nature, often oppressed us, but the feeling seldom failed to give way finally to a serene trust in that Being who presides equally over the calm and the tempest, and on whose power and benevolence the solitary traveller soon comes to repose with child-like confidence.

On the third day of our journey the soil became drier, and the general aspect of the country underwent a great change. Our path ran up a slightly elevated but abrupt ridge, the slopes of which were strewn with fragments of calcareous rock, resembling a great wall which had fallen into ruin. I could not forget that the courier at San Luis had promised us a good road until the sixth day, and I wondered, as we struggled up the rugged declivity, with the aid of vines and the branches of overhanging trees, what kind of a route must be in reserve for us on our seventh day! Among the novelties in vegetation which we now encountered, were a considerable number of cacao trees, easily recognized by their little white flowers and their peculiar fruit, starting directly from the trunk and branches. This was the first time I had seen the plant on its native soil. At the foot of the *sierra* a humbler vegetation, made up of *malpighias* and *aroides*, succeeded to the loftier forest, and soon the humidity of the ground, covered with a profusion of gigantic reeds, announced the proximity of the Rio Usumasinta, which here bears the name of *Santa Ysabel*, on the banks of which we made our encampment.

The river at this point is from twelve to fifteen yards broad. We crossed at daylight, on foot, making use of the rocks, which project here and there above the surface at easy distances apart. When we reached the opposite bank we were no longer in the district of Peten, but in that of Vera Paz. Our first adventure, in the new jurisdiction, was the killing of a peccary, an event which greatly elated our Indians. They divided it in seven pieces, of which each took one, and then we proceeded gayly on our way to our noon halt, on the banks of a little river called *Muchanja*, which we reached with formidable appetites, augmented by the prospect of a good meal. Our followers were not slow in making a fire and preparing a peculiar dish from the fat and blood of the animal, which they ate with obvious delight. Morin, on his part, was not behindhand, but cutting off a number of slices of the meat, he prepared what he called *beef-steaks*, glorifying them in advance with exaggerated praise. But his eulogies were not sustained by the result, for his steaks turned out to be atrociously tough and dry, to such a degree indeed as to defy our attempts at mastication. It was too late to hunt for something better, and we were compelled to soothe our disappointment, as philosophically as possible, on hard *tortillas* moistened with water—victims of our too eager anticipations!

Rain surprised us before we were through with our sumptuous repast. The Indians at once unrolled their *petates* and sheltered themselves beneath this impervious covering. I had early discovered the value of the *petate*, and had secured one at the cost of a *medio* or six cents, which proved infinitely more serviceable than all the costly articles, designed for the same purpose, which I had brought from Paris. Contrivances of India rubber are useless in these countries, where the heat softens them almost to fusion.

The rain soon ceased, and we resumed our journey. Our path was over low marshy ground, cut up by numerous trib-

utaries of the Usumasinta, which we crossed on fallen tree trunks, where they were too deep to be easily forded. When we finally encamped, we spent the evening in jerking the flesh of our peccary over a slow fire of green wood—a process, which truth compels me to say, went far to make it tender and eatable, and removed much of the prejudice against it which my first experience had occasioned.

The next day the sky was overcast, and a fine rain set in, which threatened to continue until evening. I decided, therefore, to adopt the light and airy costume of the Indians. In these latitudes, the rain, which falls warm, is more endurable than in Europe, and the faintest ray of sunlight serves to dispel the dampness. I found myself so much more comfortable in my new garb—*i. e.*, a pair of light drawers—that I feel no hesitation in recommending it to those travelling in the tropics, under similar circumstances. Why should we continue to wear, under a burning sun, garments damp with perspiration or wet with rain? On arriving at our place of encampment I put on a dry flannel vest, and this precaution was sufficient to keep up a proper equilibrium in the functions of the skin.

Toward the middle of the day, while I was travelling a little in advance of the party, I perceived, by the side of the road, a boa coiled up and apparently asleep. Our Indians were anxious to kill him, but I forbade their doing so. As the ground was open, and free from rocks and bushes, I was desirous of testing the sagacity of this serpent, of which I had heard so much, and ascertain how he would proceed to extricate himself from his perilous position. At first he remained perfectly motionless, as if deliberating upon his course of action. Soon, however, he commenced crawling away backwards, his threatening head protecting his retreat. His neck, during the execution of this manœuvre, was much contracted, so that in case of danger he could dart it forward

with the more force. Our dog endeavored to attack him at some unguarded point, but he could not evade the vigilant eye of the reptile, who throughout his retreat preserved his defensive attitude. Having reached the foot of a tree he slipped his tail into a hole in the ground, into which his body gradually glided, finally followed by his head, which so long as it was visible maintained its attitude of menace.

Toward evening, the forest which is full of cryptogamous plants, assumed an extraordinary appearance. An immense variety of ferns, some creeping and parasitical, and others almost arborescent, were mixed largely with the palms. We found also, resting on a bed of moss, some delicate rose-colored eggs, a trifle smaller than those of the hen, which the Indians said belonged to the wood partridge. I never saw this bird, which certainly belongs to the family of gallinæ, although I have frequently heard its melancholy cry, on the approach of night.

Hardly had we reached the *rancho of Chichac*, when one of our men complained of general illness, and especially of violent pains in his head. I found him feverish, and was proceeding to administer such remedies as I thought his case required, when the physician of the party insisted upon taking him under his own care. They were all aware that I carried a box of medicines with me, but the Indians rarely have faith in the white man's remedies. While admitting his superiority on most points, they prefer, when ill, to have recourse to sorcery, the superstitious practices, and the receipts handed down to them from their ancestors. Their lancet consists of a small triangular piece of glass or *obsidian*, fastened with wax in a little wooden handle. A slight blow upon this instrument causes it to enter the vein, producing a slight incision, from which the blood issues drop by drop. This operation, at which I assisted, was dexterously performed on a vein in the hand. After it was thought that sufficient blood had been al-

lowed to flow, the surgeon applied a pinch of salt to the wound, and led his patient to dinner.

The first half of our journey was now over, and no accident had yet occurred to us, whereat we were greatly cheered and encouraged. The season to be sure was propitious; but Heaven had otherwise smiled on us and smoothed the obstacles in our path, and nightly I bent my knee in gratitude for its protecting care.

On the sixth day we entered a dismal portion of the forest, where the forest was so thick as to be entirely impenetrable to the rays of the sun. A dim light, like that of early morning, filtered through the dense foliage, and tinged our thoughts with a shade of melancholy and apprehension. To the ordinary difficulties of the route, were superadded that of a luxuriant vegetation, which, as the road had been neglected for three years, very much impeded our progress. The district already began to justify its evil repute, and afforded our Indians an opportunity of glorifying Peten at the expense of Vera Paz.

In the midst of this forest flows a small river, over a bed bristling with rough rocks, torn up from stratified beds which dip at nearly right angles with the surface. The convulsions of nature, which gave to this region its peculiar configuration, are indicated by great masses of disrupted calcareous rocks, scattered in all directions, and which heighten the sombre aspect of the solitudes with their pale, sepulchral forms. Here silence reigns supreme, and life is visible only in the rank vegetation by which the traveller is surrounded. We saw neither bird, nor beast, nor reptile—only occasional clouds of mosquitos drifted across our path, and forced us to accelerate our pace. In some places the ground was strewn with dry leaves, resembling those of our own forests in the autumn time, but of astonishing dimensions. Among them I may mention the leaves of the *bop*, similar to those of the oak,

but two feet and a half in length by a foot in width. We found strange fruits decaying beneath gigantic trees, but few of them were edible, and most of them without names known to science. I called the attention of our guides to some faint traces of human feet which seemed to cross our path, and were lost in the forest. They pronounced them to be those of the remnants of the Lacandon Indians who still reside among the mountains of *Chichec*.

At the close of this day's journey, we turned a little aside from our direct path to the southward, towards the rugged banks of the *Boloncoh*, where we passed the night in a cavern, black with smoke from the fires of previous travellers. From this point our path lay over marshy ground, which had evidently once been covered with water. Its traces were visible on the rocks, and the surface of the ground was sprinkled over with shells. Wherever the substratum of rocks was visible, it was full of deep rents and great cellular cavities, partially filled with water, in which, wherever the light fell favorably, could be seen numbers of fishes of different varieties. Our guides asserted that some of these cavernous lakes were haunted by alligators, but I saw no traces of these reptiles. When the September rains begin, the water rises in these singular reservoirs, and finally overflows from a thousand orifices, and covers the country, far and wide, so that travellers are obliged to take long and weary detours to escape the perils of the route.

We left this dreary, marshy waste, through the stony channel of a dry stream, and during the rest of the day travelled from ravine to ravine, over a broken country, covered with rocks and disrupted trees, which were scattered about in direful confusion. This continued until we reached the station of *Campamac*, an hour before sunset, having achieved this difficult part of the road in less time than we had dared to anticipate.

Campamac is put down on the map as a place of some importance. A half dozen worm-eaten posts stuck in the ground in the midst of the forest, and supporting a thatched roof, a small clearing in front, and faint traces of a path leading to it in one direction, and from it in another—these are the only indications of man's occasional visits to this deserted spot. When studying the programme of my route in France, I had noticed the name of Campamac put down in large letters, and now I had the reality before me; yet, in spite of my disappointment, I experienced a secret satisfaction in the reflection that I had really reached the distant point which I had so often visited in imagination.

It was not without considerable effort, and after a series of mishaps, that we succeeded in extricating ourselves from the mud of Campamac. At a distance of a league and a half there is a chain of mountains extending towards the south-east, the declivities of which are covered with a fine, reddish clay, which renders them very difficult of ascent. We crossed successively the *cerros* of *Sakikib*, of *Chouyteu* and *Jierro*, calling in our hands to the aid of our feet, and dragging ourselves up the notches cut by preceding travellers in the steep sides of these mountains. Still, we found no absolute precipices, and although one must not expect to get on without suffering repeated falls, yet they are not generally likely to be dangerous. Even at the highest points in this portion of our route, our view was much circumscribed by the surrounding forests. Hills and valleys, rocks and streams, are all equally concealed by their thick, green drapery. At two points we observed deep circular excavations, like wells, surrounded by rocks. At the bottom of one of them, yawning at the summit of a mountain, was a bed of clay of from five to six yards deep.

At the foot of the mountain chain flows a stream called *Chimuchuch*, which we crossed on a singularly picturesque

and primitive bridge, formed from the trunk of a gigantic tree called by the natives *bop*. It had been stricken down by the lightning and had fallen across the stream, and now afforded a safe and easy means of passage from one bank to the other. The spot was one of great natural beauty, and was convenient withal for an encampment, so I resolved to stop here for the remainder of the day and night. My resolution was warmly seconded by my companions, who, like myself, were way-worn and weary. We soon effected a little clearing, and a rude hut rose rapidly in its centre. I devoted the afternoon to augmenting my collection, and succeeded in adding to it a coral snake, and a beautiful insect, of metallic brilliancy, of the longicorne family (*Mallaspis More'eti*, Lucas).

Toward evening the angry barking of our dog announced the vicinity of strangers. Looking in the direction of Cahabon we saw, issuing from the forest, three persons of sinister aspect. The first was evidently a *ladino* (mixed Spaniard and Indian). His thin lips, high cheek bones, hooked nose, small bright eyes, all betrayed a character compounded of cunning and audacity. He carried a gun, and wore a white head-dress twisted in the form of a turban. A tall mulatto, and an Indian with a brutal visage, the one armed with a hatchet and the other with a long hunting knife, followed the stranger, who was apparently their leader. Their baggage consisted of a large bundle which the Indian bore on his shoulders. They approached our guides without any manifestation of surprise, and after exchanging civilities prepared to *bivouac* at our side. This increase of our party annoyed Fida greatly, who kept up a growling vigilance the whole night long. As for ourselves, without precisely fearing these strangers, we thought it well to be prepared for any treachery on their part. We consequently placed our effects under our shed, looked carefully to our arms, and put them in a convenient position beside us; and then, relying on the vigilance of

Fida, we gave ourselves up to sleep, little dreaming of the surprise which was in store for us on awakening.

When we opened our eyes the sun was already up, and gilding the tops of the trees. Astonished at hearing no noise, we arose hastily and emerged from our little hut. The embers of the fire were still smoking, but the bivouac was deserted. A solemn silence pervaded the forest. Terrified, we looked around for our guides, but they had disappeared, and their effects were nowhere to be seen. Our fears soon resolved themselves into certainties, and we were shudderingly forced to admit to ourselves, that we had been abandoned. Vainly did we seek to comprehend the cause of this odious and unsuspected treachery.

Our first reflections were as to what course was to be taken. Morin proposed continuing on our journey, but I could not make up my mind to renounce all hopes of the return of our guides, nor did I like the idea of abandoning my effects, which, although not numerous, were to me invaluable. Perhaps, after all, the Indians were only setting this snare in order to rob us of them. Besides, it was within the limits of possibility that other travellers might be journeying this way, and come to our relief. We took an account of our stock of provisions, and found that we had sufficient food for four days, while the shell-fish and cabbages of the palms to be found in the vicinity, not to speak of the game which we might be able to shoot, would at least keep famine from our camp for several days more. We concluded, therefore, that it was best under all the circumstances, to remain where we were, for three days, and if at the end of that time nothing favorable turned up we might endeavor to find our way alone to Cahabon.

Having come to this decision, I left Morin at work, setting snares for game, while I started out to explore the surrounding country. I took good care not to lose my way as I had done at Palenque, but marked the trees, and broke down the

branches in my path. At the distance of a quarter of a league, all signs of a road were lost in the midst of the ravines which intersected the country, so that I was forced to retrace my steps, with the painful conviction that my efforts in tracing the route had proved abortive.

The day passed without the occurrence of any incident. Toward midnight a distant roaring suddenly awakened me. Our dog, a courageous little animal, commenced barking angrily. I roused my sleeping companion in time to hear the same sound repeated, more distinctly and apparently nearer at hand. We started out into the little clearing in order to avoid a surprise; but although we kept steady watch until morning, we heard nothing further. It was doubtless the roar of some jaguar in search of his prey.

As soon as day dawned Morin visited the snares which he had set for game, but returned greatly disappointed, bringing with him a solitary rat, the sole reward of his efforts. This rat was nevertheless a curious looking creature, with ears of such extraordinary size that I considered him worthy a place in my collection.

Towards mid-day I shouldered my gun and directed my steps toward the bridge of Chimuchuch, in search of game. Just as I was about crossing the river, I caught sight of our Indian interpreter on the opposite bank. This man was evidently advancing toward me, but perhaps detecting an expression of anger and menace in my face, he changed his mind and sought to escape into the undergrowth. Irritated all the more by this movement, I raised my gun and fired almost involuntarily. The fugitive screamed. I ran to the spot from whence his voice proceeded, and found him lying on the ground half dead with fright. I raised him up in no very gentle manner and dragged him to our camp.

Morin was greatly surprised. He had heard the shot, but was not prepared for this kind of game. We held a council

of war, and then commenced interrogating our prisoner. My anger was calmed now that he was in my power, and besides prudence counselled a mild course of action. I endeavored, therefore, to reassure the Indian, which, however, was not an easy task.

When he had somewhat recovered from his fright, I asked him whence he came. He answered, "From the *sierra*."

"And your comrades," I inquired, "where are they?"

"They are in the *sierra*, señor."

"Why did they leave us?"

The Indian was silent. I repeated my question, but could elicit no response. Morin, knowing his weakness, poured out for him a glass of rum, and I soon after succeeded in engaging him in conversation, as follows:

"Have the Indians of San Luis any cause of complaint against us?"

"No, señor."

"Have we overladen them with baggage?"

"No, señor."

"Have we maltreated them?"

"No, señor."

"Did I not pay them in advance the price agreed upon?"

"Yes, señor."

"Did I not, in addition, recompense them for any game or fruits which they brought me from the forest?"

"Yes, señor."

"Did I not, voluntarily, share with them my sugar, brandy, tobacco, and any game which we shot?"

"Yes, señor."

"Then what had they to complain of?"

"They did not complain, señor. They only said that the pay was small, and the way long."

"Why did this not occur to them at San Luis?"

"Señor, the idea of leaving you would never have oc-

a false step, which might easily prove fatal. Even our guides, notwithstanding their experience, found it necessary to call to their aid all their skill and courage. We nevertheless crossed the mountain safely, and kept on our way, without halting, over the *Cerro de Leagua*, which is the highest crest of this mountain chain. From the lofty calcareous rocks with which it is covered, an immense expanse of country would have been visible had not the view been intercepted by the eternal vegetation, which was here as vigorous as on the lower grounds behind us. I clambered to the top of a tall tree, but only a few blue rifts, indicating probably the course of deep and unnamed valleys, were discernible. Our day's journey had been a hard one, and for the first time I detected some symptoms of annoyance and impatience among my companions.

On the morning of the thirteenth day we reached the last ridge of the mountain chain, which we crossed by a narrow and dangerous pass, where we seemed for a time to be suspended in mid-air. Suddenly, through a break in the forest, a vast blue expanse opened before us, and our Indian guide, who was in advance, cried out joyously, "*The savannas!*" The cry was caught up, and "The savannas!—the savannas!!" was echoed throughout the line of the foot-worn procession. Even these rude Indians, inured from infancy to the greatest fatigue, and born and brought up among hills and mountains, and under the shadows of great forests, could not see the clear sun streaming down in a broad sweep on the vast landscape without an emotion of joy and an expression of satisfaction. I soon reached the spot, and thence, through an opening in the forest, caused by the fall of an old tree, caught my first glimpse of this new world. It was an immense panorama, a confused and undefinable maze of hills, valleys and savannas, in the centre of which, perched on a group of hills, stood the town of Cahabon. A circle of low mountains framed in the picture, beyond which, towering to the clouds,

could be traced the dim peaks of the great Cordilleras. We all stopped, the Indians laid down their loads, and we traced out the features of the country with feelings of liveliest curiosity and satisfaction. Morin, less demonstrative than myself, seated himself apart, and smoked his pipe in silence. To me the scene had all the attractions of that "promised land" which gladdened the eyes of the prophets of old.

When our enthusiasm had somewhat abated, and we had recovered from the fatigues of the ascent, we commenced wending our way downwards. We soon reached a thicket of *aroides* and bamboo trees, which clustered around the foot of the mountain and extended into the valley. Here the hot, close atmosphere, contrasting strongly with the cool air of the mountains, seemed almost insufferable, and our eyes, accustomed to the dim light of the forest, were dazzled by the brilliancy of the sun. Issuing on the open plain, I looked back on the gloomy perspective of mountains accumulated on the route to Peten, with no slight feeling of pride that I had traversed them successfully, and that the secrets of their solitudes were mine.

An hour later we ascended the steeps of Cahabon. The people contemplated our approach from the summits of the little eminences which rose on every hand, and from behind scattered rocks, with furtive glances of curiosity, retreating as we came near. I must admit that our bronzed faces, dilapidated clothing and conspicuous arms, were collectively not calculated to inspire confidence or invite familiarity. Two women, whom we encountered bathing, showed more courage; for on sight of us they modestly hid their faces, leaving the rest of their persons to blush on their behalf. We went straight to the *cabildo*, where, however, I was not allowed to stop, for the curate of the place, hearing of my arrival, at once invited me to his own house. Here I found, for the first time since leaving Carmen, a clean and well-ventilated dwell-

ing. A wide and charming view was visible from its windows, which, however, I neglected for a still more delightful supper, and a real bed with a veritable mattrass, and sheets white as snow. To appreciate these comforts rightly one needs only to be deprived of them for a period of six months. Yet such had become the force of habit, that with all these luxuriant concomitants I could not sleep, and was finally obliged to seek for slumber in my tattered hammock, where I dozed off directly into the land of dreams—much to the mortification of my host, who fancied that his hospitable intentions were not properly appreciated by the eccentric stranger.

THE THEATRE OF GUATEMALA.

IX.

THE CAVERN.

Cahabon—Picturesque views—Climate—Character of the people—Language—Physical traits—Costume—Marriage customs—The foundation of Cahabon—Zeal of the early missionaries—Organization of the Christianized towns—Policy of the Dominicans—Restraints of their code—Retrogression of the Indians—Decline in numbers—The mechanic arts—Lack of commerce—The cura Balduini—Departure for *Lanquin*—Character of the intervening country—Alpine scenery—Grand reception—Lanquin, its people and their peculiarities—Remarkable cavern—*El Dueño de la Cueva*—Nature's laboratory—Human relics—Indian superstitions—Sierra of Lanquin—Farewells!—Resumption of journey to Coban.

On arriving at Cahabon, after traversing the dense forests intervening between that point and Flores, the traveller is literally blinded with the apparent excess of light. His eyes roam over an expanse which, from contrast, seems almost boundless, and the arch of heaven appears limitless above his head. Everything wears a new aspect, and the impulses of life experience a new vigor. Such, at least, were the impressions produced on my mind and feelings by the transition.

The landscape which presents itself from Cahabon is extremely beautiful, resembling some favored view amongst the Apennines, on the warm and sunny slopes of the Sabine.

The principal church of the place, and the old convent in which my host resided, stand close together on the summit of a commanding central eminence. Around this spreads out the town, a good half league in circuit, made up of dwellings embowered in fruit trees, some clustering on little knolls and others scarcely visible in dark gorges, altogether making up a scene of surpassing picturesque loveliness. A little river flowing through a deep ravine, and called *Actel-ha* (cold water),

divides the town in two parts. It flows over a bed of transition calcareous rock, and is interrupted by a very graceful little fall, which gives out an unceasing melody, in perfect harmony with the scene.

Surrounding the landscape is a blue line of wooded hills, interrupted only at one point towards the south-east, where a passage is afforded for the winds from that quarter, which sweep down on Cahabon, cold, loaded with miasma, and planting the seeds of disease in their path. A journey of five days in that direction will enable the traveller to reach the lake and port of Isabal. The road is similar to that from Peten; that is to say, it is wholly neglected.

Forming a contrast equally marked and agreeable with the scenes through which I had passed, I at first thought I could never weary of Cahabon. Day after day I traced out anew the cool gorges, and my imagination busied itself in weaving little romances in connection with every picturesque hut which peered out modestly from among the verdure. At night I dropped off to sleep in cadence with the music of the little waterfall. But these impressions gradually became blunted, a sense of languor oppressed my system, my muscles lost their elasticity, and I became more and more disinclined to exertion. Only the hope of new discoveries, in the department of natural history, occasionally roused me to action.

I had reached Cahabon with strong prejudices against the people, who had been described to me as ungovernable barbarians, without the first elements of civilization. The corregidor of Peten had not failed to put me on my guard against them. But my experience afforded me another evidence of the impolicy of trusting to reports current in one town concerning the inhabitants of another, who, although contiguous, nevertheless have but few relations with each other. The bad repute of the place is, however, mainly due to the murder of their priest by the Indians, several years previously, in

a fit of drunken fury. Grosser, doubtless, and less industrious than their neighbors, they are really not more wicked, although their ignorance and unbridled passion for spirits, render them averse to discipline. They never manifest openly any resistance to the laws, yet all attempts to persuade or compel their obedience to them have failed, more through their *inertia* than their active opposition.

These Indians belong to a different race from the Mayas, yet it is difficult to determine precisely the one to which they pertain, for they are themselves unable to throw the least light on their origin.* It is supposed that they are descended from the *Quichés*, occupying the northern provinces of Guatemala, whence they emigrated at the time of the Conquest. They speak the *Quec-chi* dialect, which is probably a corruption of the word *Quiche*.† They have no grammar, or dictionary, although the Dominicans constructed several, and left, in testimony of their erudition, a translation into this idiom of the book of Genesis. The inhabitants of Cahabon appear to be of a darker color than the Mayas, with less regular features, and less symmetry of form. Childhood, with them, takes a savage aspect; and old age is without dignity; among the men it bears the stamp of vulgar and repulsive degradation, and in the women it is hideous in the extreme. All have low foreheads, high cheek bones, and the top of their heads rise to a point in a manner apparently artificial.

* M. Morelet, whose authority we are bound to accept on all matters connected with natural history, is not always exact in his ethnological observations. The *Quec-chi* dialect is one only of the numerous idioms of which the Tzendal or Maya may be taken as the radix. It appears to be most closely connected with the Kachiquel, which, with the Zutugil, Quiché, and Maya, constituted the four great divisions of the *lengua madre*, or mother language, of the civilized nations of Guatemala, Chiapa, and Yucatan.—*T.*

† The *Quec-chi* dialect is spoken in *Cahabon*, *Lanquin*, *San Pedro Carcha*, *Coban*, and *San Juan*, in Vera Paz, as also in *Chinauta* and *Mixco* in the department of Guatemala.

Their costume, without being remarkable, in point of picturesqueness, is preferable to the loose, flowing shirt of Peten and Yucatan. A piece of cotton cloth twisted around the head in the form of a turban, short but wide drawers, a full shirt, fastened at the waist, and usually thrown over the left shoulder, combine to give them, at a distance, the appearance of Arabs. This resemblance is still more striking when they are indolently reclining in groups under the shadow of some old wall. The dress of the women is primitive in the extreme, consisting of a simple blue skirt, fastened around the waist, and barely reaching to the knees. The fashion of wearing a chemise, introduced by the missionaries, has fallen into disuse. When they are worn on Sundays, they are thrown over the shoulders, like a mantle. As for the children, it is sufficient to say that their freedom of movement is quite unrestrained by drapery of any kind.

There exists in Cahabon, a custom peculiar to all the Indians speaking the *Quec-chi* dialect. As soon as the boys attain the age of nine or ten years, the parents begin to think of settling them in life. The women take this important affair in hand, although among almost all savage nations, as well as among civilized people generally, the men are allowed to assume the initiative in matters of this kind. When the negotiations are concluded, and the last obstacles removed by presents, the little girl chosen leaves the paternal roof for that of her future husband. But as the ecclesiastical law forbids marriage under the age of fourteen, the little one grows up in the interval, and her good and bad qualities become developed, so that at the end of the time prescribed, she frequently ceases to please her intended husband or her adoptive family. In such a case, she is sent back to her own parents, and a return of the presents, cementing the contract, is requested. Of course this is invariably followed by a refusal; hard words ensue, resulting in a quarrel, and frequently in

blows, and the feelings of resentment engendered by an injury of this nature are often transmitted from generation to generation.

The foundation, not alone of Cahabon, but also of most of the towns and villages of Vera Paz, was laid by the Dominicans. These daring apostles, the first to penetrate into this wild region, withdrew the Indians from their forest life, and rendered them more social and less averse to discipline. On listening to the religious chants of the missionaries, which had been translated into their own tongue, the Indians were so surprised and delighted that they knelt *en masse* beside the humble crosses which the missionaries had brought with them. Here the children received their first lessons in submission and obedience; the women learned to spin and weave; the men were taught agriculture and the arts, and in a short time numerous little communities sprung up, composed of orderly artisans and laborers. The missionaries did not limit their efforts to rendering the Indians industrious, but assiduously applied themselves to their religious culture. They did not attempt to combat their errors and prejudices by violence, but, on the contrary, had recourse to gentleness and persuasion. And if they did not entirely succeed in unravelling the tangled web of their intelligence, it was from no want of patient and earnest effort. Their success, although not complete, was still remarkable. A church of imposing architecture was erected on a central eminence, and its high altar was decorated with precious stones, of which the inhabitants to this day are more jealous than of their own personal effects. Numerous chapels and buildings of public utility were successively erected in the vicinity, around which soon clustered five hundred dwellings, which sprung up as if by enchantment under the willing hands of the Indians.

The administration of the Dominicans was based on the supposed inferiority of the American race, in which they conscientiously believed. They conceived, perhaps justly, that

rigorous government is as necessary to society in its infancy as to individuals in their childhood. It cannot be denied that their system was well adapted to the character of the Indians: it was an absolute but kindly jurisdiction, similar to that exercised by the father of a family. In order to insure their contentment, the Dominicans considered it requisite that they should have abundant occupation, and that idleness should never be allowed to pass unpunished.* The discipline introduced by them in Cahabon has left indelible traces. They divided the community into six parishes, each under the protection of its special saint. The little white houses in the form of *ajoupas* which one sees scattered at intervals through the town, serve as chapels where the statues of the various patrons of the town are religiously preserved. The Indians still worship and pray to them. But, after all, the efforts of the missionaries only resulted in a change in the objects of native idolatry. The intelligence of the Indians has never attained to the comprehension of a spiritual religion, and I regret to say that the Christianity of the most devout is only, after all, a slight modification from paganism.

In order to put down idleness and correct the inconstancy of their flocks, the priests subjected them to the severest discipline. They obliged each one, in his turn, to devote himself to the support of the church, the convent, or to such matters as affected the material welfare of the community. This custom now exists only in Cahabon, San Augustin Lanquin, and San Pedro Carcha. Eight men, selected by the alcaldes, every morning place themselves at the disposal of the curate, who employs them on different public works, under the direction of the most capable among them, who, in virtue of being elevated to the position of mayor-domo, assists with becoming

* The Jesuits, whose ability is generally conceded, govern the Indians of Brazil in the same manner.—A. Saint Hilaire, *Voy. dans l'Intérieur du Brésil*, vol. ii. c. 1.

gravity, with folded arms, his cloak thrown over his shoulder and his knife in his belt, at the dinner of his pastor. He will not willingly relinquish this portion of his duties, although it is purely honorary. The women thus chosen, on their part, prepare the maize, cook the *tortillas*, and wash the linen of the cura. In addition to this, the whole population contributes to the subsistence and other wants of the cura, in accordance with a traditional law. The alcaldes furnish the fat pine wood which serves him for fire and light. The six *barrios* or wards are bound alternately to supply him with maize, eggs, and beans. The fishermen discharge their obligations to the Church by supplies of fish and fresh-water crabs, while the remainder of the inhabitants contribute fruits and vegetables, principally the cabbage of the palm, which is highly esteemed in Cahabon. The duties of the women consist in grinding corn, making *tortillas*, and in taking care of the cura's linen.

The labors enumerated above do not seem at all irksome to the Indians; they perform them as natural obligations, which it is impossible to avoid, and with an apparent, if not a real pleasure. We certainly must render a tribute of admiration to the Dominicans, who succeeded in securing so much from a poor and indolent race, and who managed to create resources, in a perfectly isolated region, by which their successors are profiting after a lapse of three centuries! As to the moral result, which was the principal object of their mission, there remains but a faint trace. Emancipated too early from their paternal restraint, they relapsed rapidly under the control of their own brutal instincts. In losing their habit of labor, they contracted an unappeasable taste for liquor, and ceased to be useful citizens, I had almost said reasonable beings—*gente de razon*, to borrow a common expression of the Spaniards. As production has diminished, so has population; and the parish of Cahabon, which fifty years ago numbered upwards of four thousand souls, now contains

scarcely three thousand. With the independence of the colonies, they manifested great insubordination, which the priests have only succeeded in overcoming by the most patient and ingenious efforts. At first, on the slightest exercise of authority, they fled to the mountains, disappearing for a time from the community, and in some cases never returning to it. These irregularities seriously disquieted the government, which sought to remedy them by the appointment of zealous and energetic officers in the district; but these found themselves powerless for good, and were soon glad to resign their task to the clergy, whose success has been considerable but not complete. The Indians are still in that feverish state of discontented submission which may, any day, be exchanged for one of open and savage independence.

It is a new spectacle for an European, that of a community of three thousand souls in which there are no professional mechanics, nor any special dedication of any portion of the people to the mechanical arts. The petty commerce in which some of the inhabitants occasionally engage is limited to obtaining a few reals for the purchase of salt or spirits, and they never seek to extend their operations beyond what is strictly necessary to their present wants. In this furtive way they export small quantities of cotton, thread of the agave, baskets, and painted calabashes, for which they find a market at Coban. They are the only manufacturers of the articles last named. With a pointed instrument they work out designs, more or less correct, upon the convex surface of a dish, and give relief to the ornamentation by roughening the intervals. In painting them the blue is made with indigo, the red with anotto, and the black with indigo mixed with lemon juice. The color is fixed by means of a greasy substance formed by boiling an insect called *aje*.* The Indians prefer being porters to pursu-

* Juarros mentions the *aje* among the drugs (*drogas*) of Vera Paz. Lib. i. c. 3.

ing any mechanical or industrious calling, and they may be seen carrying great loads of sarsaparilla on their shoulders for the *ladinos*, instead of gathering themselves that valuable commodity on their own account. As in Peten, there are no title deeds to property, but the rights of inheritance are respected, and are transmitted from generation to generation without question being raised of their validity.

The greater part of the information which I have recorded was communicated to me by my host, a young ecclesiastic born in a happier land, but who, in the noble hope of being able to enlighten and ameliorate the condition of these poor savages, had left the sunny slopes of Italy for these distant solitudes. The Abbé Balduini had been in Cahabon for two years. He did not conceal from me the sterility of his field of labor, and I fully comprehended his feelings of disappointment when I came to comprehend the task which he had voluntarily undertaken. Without endeavoring to make new converts, he had sought to improve the morals of his flock, to banish intoxicating drinks, to encourage and foster a taste for labor—in a word, by patient and steady effort, to revive the good works of the missionaries of earlier days. Few of the missionaries of the present time are cast in the same mould with those ardent and devoted apostles who first raised the standard of faith in the New World. Such characters belong to epochs in the history of humanity which do not often come round, and which have their periods and special purposes in the economy of Providence. The Abbé Balduini was essentially a man of the present day. Of a delicate, refined nature, he was capable of great exaltation and enthusiasm, but little fitted for a sustained contest. He admitted that his isolation from intercourse with persons of education and capacity was a sad trial, and he entertained me with the recital of his griefs, his projects and his hopes, pouring into my breast the heavy load which had so long oppressed his own. His face wore

that expression of austerity, at once noble and gentle, which testified of fierce passions overcome: but when animated by the fire of sentiment, or the memories of his native land and his early years, every glance of his eye, every gesture, every tone of his voice, bespoke the fearful contest that must have been waged in his soul before he had acquired the calm and patient resignation of the missionary. To a man of his temperament and constitution of mind, life in Cahabon must be a prolonged torture. In an unbroken solitude the soul may lift itself to a free communion with God; but here, where the harsh voice of drunken and contentious savages is never still, such holy abstraction is impossible.

My sojourn in Cahabon was short. Three days after my arrival the cura was called, in his ministerial capacity, to visit the neighboring town of Lanquin, and invited me to accompany him. As this place was in my route to Guatemala, I gladly accepted his invitation. We set out with an escort of Indians, whose duty it was to carry the priestly robes and sacred ornaments for the first half of the journey; the duty of carrying them for the remaining distance devolving, according to a traditional custom, on the people of Lanquin.

The morning was delightful, the air clear and cool, and the valley bathed in dew. Our path followed the flanks of the hills, winding in and out, to conform to the irregularities of the ground. The soil was throughout clayey, but covered with a layer of calcareous gravel, ferruginous in color, while occasional projections of primitive rocks announced our vicinity to the great central Cordilleras of the continent. We remarked little patches of cotton and maize, here and there, while the prospect was brightened by occasional glimpses of little huts half hidden among fruit trees. Most of these belong to the Indians of San Pedro Carcha, who are more industrious and provident than their neighbors.

After travelling for three hours, we reached the river of

Cahabon, the foaming waters of which dash noisily along the base of a steep chain of mountains which runs parallel to its course. It rises in the heights of *Sulin*, belonging to the *Patal* chain, and after watering the towns of *Taltick*, *Santa Cruz*, and *Coban*, turns suddenly toward the south, and breaking through the mountains which intercept its course in that direction, flows finally into the Gulf of Dulce or Lake Isabal. In the distance may be seen the gorge in which it is engulfed, after having received the *Rio de Lanquin*, a still more impetuous torrent. The dazzling brightness of the waters of this stream, its rapidity and volume, and the pines which crown the *sierras* that border it, give to the country here the aspect of an Alpine scene, and one, furthermore, by no means wanting in grandeur.

We followed a path running along the banks of the river, delightfully shaded, but narrow, uneven, and in places undermined by the current. Here the Abbé Balduini was evidently ill at ease, and never failed to dismount whenever we came to a dangerous spot. To Morin and myself, however, the road was comparatively easy. After having travelled over the American continent, one is never astonished at any road, however bad, and soon comes to exact from the animal which he bestrides services that elsewhere would be considered impossible. Whenever we halted, our Indians put down their burdens, and although dripping with perspiration, plunged into the water. They were all good swimmers, yet the curate's own servant, a large and powerful mulatto from Nicaragua, surpassed them all. His athletic proportions greatly impressed our escort, and besides this, they remarked that he had a heavy hand, and a well sharpened knife in his girdle.

We finally turned off from the river towards Lanquin. The intervening country was rough and broken, and the soil was scant and bare, with only an occasional stunted pine to relieve its arid surface, from which the rays of the sun and the heat

were reflected with an almost insupportable brightness and power. When we were still at a distance from the town, we heard the church bells, echoed by the mountains, announcing the important event of our arrival. We soon encountered a group of Indians, stationed near a little stream, whose duty it was to receive us with the customary harangue. They were all of mature age, or rather old men, remarkable for their gravity. They were dressed in the Cahabon fashion, and with their imperturbable faces, withered features, bronzed complexions, and singular turbans, might have been mistaken in the East for decayed eunuchs banished from the seraglio. They were, in fact, the municipal corps of Lanquin. In front of these magistrates stood a youth, in the simple costume of the golden age, engaged in beating a drum. His appearance from the front was decent enough, but when he turned around I could not help exclaiming to the curate, "For charity's sake, Señor Cura, give him another drum and complete his costume!" But Father Balduini was too much absorbed in his own affairs to pay much attention to my remark. In fact, he had been taken somewhat unawares by the dignitaries of Lanquin, and hastened to adjust his band and to conceal his little white vest beneath the folds of an ample cassock. As soon as he had properly adjusted his priestly robes, he majestically crossed the river, and after pretending to listen most attentively to the harangue of the municipality, which was long and monotonous, he gave the people his blessing. We then put spurs to our horses and galloped into the village, in the midst of a congregation of people as remarkable for their savage aspect as for the scantiness of their clothing.

We dismounted at the door of the parsonage, where everything had been arranged for the reception of the worthy priest. The floor had been strewn with the branches of pines, and dinner was ready and waiting. Our dessert consisted of pineapples, of exquisite flavor, for which this district is celebrated.

The population of San Augustin Lanquin, like that of Cahabon, consists entirely of Indians, and numbers two thousand five hundred souls. This village, buried as it were in a cavity of the mountains, owes the little movement and activity which it possesses to the fact of its being on the road to Coban. It contains, however, a great natural curiosity, a strange cavern, which I consider so remarkable as to be worthy of more than passing notice, notwithstanding the slight interest which usually attaches to descriptions of this class of phenomena.*

The mouth of the *cueva*, shaped like that of a funnel, opens at the base of a limestone mountain, a quarter of a league from the village. The *Rio de Lanquin* takes its rise within it, and dashes out from its mouth with great noise and impetuosity. The body of water is not less than ten yards in width, but its depth can scarcely be determined. Immense trees, growing out from the crevices of the rocks which shut it in, and bending forward as if in search of light, seem constantly in danger of being uprooted by the torrent; while numberless vines, springing up under their protection, bind them together, and, by a sort of reciprocity, maintain them in their perilous position.

We ascended a steep point which overlooks the fall, and crept through a narrow opening in the side of the *sierra*, into the cavern, where a few faint rays of sunlight penetrate, giving a bluish tint to the numerous stalactites which the imagination of the Indians readily transforms into statues of saints and Madonnas. But if, as sometimes happens, instead of these pleasing illusions, they fancy that they detect the flaming eye of *El Dueño de la Cueva* (the owner of the cavern), a mysterious personage who inhabits its depths, neither exhortations nor promises of reward can induce them to enter.

* Juarros gives the cavern of Lanquin the first place among the curiosities of Vera Paz, and Herrara also describes it, but very inaccurately.

This time, however, El Dueño did not make his appearance; our guides advanced boldly, and we followed, in the midst of rugged steeps, abrupt precipices, and chaotic masses of fantastically-shaped rocks, which vividly recalled some of Dante's dark and fearful pictures. The cavern seemed boundless, but at the request of the cura some of our guides went forward, holding aloft their torches, which gradually revealed to us its limits.

On their return, we determined on a somewhat perilous adventure. A few yards from the point where we stood was visible the mouth of a dark and yawning chasm, from which proceeded the murmur of distant and invisible waters. It was not without some misgivings that we made up our minds to follow the Indians and descend into this abyss. The most agile among them undertook to light us on our way, and we commenced the descent. After overcoming the first difficulties, the chasm became narrower, and its walls broke away in the form of a gigantic stairway, which, leading from precipice to precipice, conducted us to the bed of the torrent. Here we found, on the brink of a stream, a fairy-like grotto, enriched with a profusion of cones, aigrettes, and a fret-work of incrustations, which no profane touch had ever dishonored. In one spot were masses of alabaster, plaited like the finest muslin, while in other places it took the elegant structure of the coral. The roof, the walls, and the floor, all were incrusted with little crystals, which sparkled like diamonds beneath the light of our torches. I was full of respectful admiration. It seemed as if we had penetrated nature's sanctuary, and had dared to surprise her in her mysterious laboratory. On all sides was audible the tinkle of water filtering its way through a thousand secret issues in the rock, finally to unite in one body before seeking the light of day. It is thus, by a slow and occult process, that nature gradually fills up the chasms rent in the earth's stony bosom by primitive convulsions; and to the

eye of the visitor to these secret cells, even inorganic matter seems to be invested with life, so vividly does the phenomenon before him recall the idea of true vegetation.

When our curiosity was satisfied, and we turned our eyes upwards towards the frightful opening through which we had descended, we experienced less pleasing emotions. By the light of the torches scattered along the path, we caught glimpses of the sombre masses of rocks which we were to scale on our return. Some stood out bold and bare, while others were huddled together in rough and chaotic masses, receding gradually until completely lost in the darkness. We made our way back, however, without mishap, and left the chasm, full of astonishment and delight at what we had seen.

In scrambling through the upper gallery, bristling in places with multitudinous pointed rocks, which I can only liken to the needles of a glacier, our attention was attracted by a singular object jammed into one of the crevices, the nature of which we could not clearly make out. One of our guides succeeded in reaching it, but drew back in affright, exclaiming that it was a human body. At these words the cura and myself seized the torches, and at the hazard of our lives descended to the spot where it lay. The Indian was not mistaken; it was, in fact, a corpse, or rather a mummy, which the dry air of the cavern had preserved from decay. The head was wedged in between the rocks, and the pelvis and lower limbs were thrown upwards. Some unfortunate being, in times past, had here found a grave. Was he the victim of crime or of an accident? We addressed this question in vain to the silent arches of the cavern. They kept their secret well! Our guides looked at each other in terror, murmuring the name of *El Dueño de la Cueva!* We endeavored to persuade them that these remains were probably those of a monkey. This hypothesis was not beyond the range of pos-

sibility, and as they did not attempt to dispute the suggestion, I fancied that our arguments had convinced them; but Father Balduini assured me that it would be many a long day before they would return to the *cueva*.

Two days after our subterranean excursion, we ascended the *sierra*, the inner depths of which we had already explored. The summit is reached by a very steep path, shadowed over by crooked and stunted trees. From this point may be seen, to the north-east, the valley leading to Cahabon. The horizon is limited in every other direction by a double chain of mountains, the summits of which are crowned with pines, as could be determined from their pyramidal outlines. The basin of Lanquin is of triangular form, and complete in its dreary isolation. Among the rocks we found a cactus with trailing and striated stalks, which bore a red prickly fruit, sweet, and of about the size of an apricot.

I early made up my mind not to remain long in Lanquin, much to the regret of the Abbé Balduini, who sought to retain me, at least until after the festival of Saint Augustin, the patron saint of the place, which was near at hand. This solemnity attracts a large number of visitors to the town, which, for the time being, is full of life. But I was only too anxious to exchange the burning climate, which was exhausting my strength, for the bracing breezes of the mountains; I therefore resisted all the entreaties of my host. When he found me resolved to go, he lent me every assistance in his power to facilitate my journey; and not content with furnishing me with provisions, filled my trunks with vanilla, copal, various specimens of the products and industry of the country, and such other objects as would be likely to recall Lanquin to my mind on my return to Europe. When, on arriving at Coban, I went to pay my guides, I found that he had forestalled me, and had himself paid them in advance.

Long years have passed since the day when, putting spurs

to my horse, I waved my hand to the lone missionary, in a mute and last farewell. I shall never forget his affectionate smile, nor his look of mingled melancholy and resignation which followed me. The Abbé Balduini was not born for solitude. Eminently social in disposition and full of susceptibility, he had mistaken his vocation. Alas! what a contrast between the sunny plains of his native Italy and the wild mountains and uncouth inhabitants of Vera Paz!

X.

LA TIERRA TEMPLADA.

Review of route—The table lands—Vast maize fields—Difficulties of the road—Public *ranchos*—Travellers' offerings—Fondness of the Indians for fermented drinks—Improved condition of the country—San Pedro Carcha—First view of Coban—Beautiful approach—Liquid amber trees—Delightful climate—Productions—Plaza of Coban—An embowered city—Hedge-rows—Population—Character of the people—Industry and the arts—Costumes—Castes—The *Ladinos*—Pleasing reminiscences—An El Dorado for Naturalists—Birds—The imperial *quetzal*—Traditions concerning it—Shells—Significant Indian names—The chase—New aspects of the forest—Tree ferns—Hunting the *quetzal*—Monkeys—Mountains—Distant volcanoes—Magnificent view—Health of Coban—Fruits and vegetables—The bananna—Coffee—Commerce of Coban—The wilds of Chisec—Refugee Indians—The Bishop Las Casas—*Tierra de Guerra*—Reduction of the country—Change in its name—Foundation of Coban—Arms of the city—Teachings of its founders—Religious reminiscences—The great church—Negro *santos*—Church of Calvario—Confidences—A sentimental episode—*Juana*—Growth of an attachment—An illusion dispelled—Abrupt departure from Coban—Juana's epistle.

FROM the alluvial plains of Tabasco and Chiapa, our route had led us, by the gradual ascent of the Usumasinta and its tributaries, to the centre of Peten, where the country broke away in a summit basin, so to speak, covered with numberless hills, isolated or in groups. Our advance toward the south, from the lake of Peten to Dolores, and from thence to San Luis, was still a constantly-increasing ascent; but here we encountered veritable mountains, great primitive chains, over which we clambered with difficulty, before descending into the valleys of Cahabon, on the opposing or Atlantic declivity of the continent. From this point, however, our route lay over a succession of high table lands, and it was only occasionally that we descended into the low levels of the *tierra caliente*. The lagoons, the savannas, and the great forests disappeared; the horizon expanded, the atmosphere became

fresh and pure, the population more compact, the ties which bind society together more numerous, and man appeared to have recovered, in a large degree, his energy and activity. He here displays greater industry, more forethought, and is less averse to labor; his domain is more extended than in higher and in lower grounds, his efforts better appreciated, and he no longer sustains an unequal contest with Nature, but subdues and binds her to his will.

The road which we followed, after leaving Lanquin, crosses over a succession of hills and valleys which rise progressively to Coban. None are of remarkable height, but there are great numbers, on table lands of varying elevations, ranging from two to three thousand feet in altitude. The cultivated fields which we encountered here, had for us the attraction of novelty; not only were the plains cleared and tilled, but the steepest slopes bore the evidences of human industry. The pine and the oak appeared only on the hill-tops. As far as our vision could reach, our eyes wandered over undulating expanses, covered with maize, the stalks of which here often reach the height of from seven to eight yards (*sept à huit mètres de hauteur*). At a distance, these maize fields have the appearance of vast prairies; but on entering them both horse and rider are lost beneath their luxuriant vegetation. Mallows, the arborescent helianthus, and similar plants, when the ground is left fallow, succeed rapidly to the forest.

As we advanced, the unusual and increasing movement and life on the road, awakened our liveliest interest. At intervals we passed long files of Indians laden with maize, cotton, mats, and other products of the country, and overtook occasional whole families of the inhabitants proceeding to their labors in the fields. Every member of these families, down to the youngest child, was provided with a *suyucal*, (a kind of cloak made of palm leaves) wrapped carefully around his

shoulders. All were on foot, and no beasts of burden were anywhere to be seen.

We were not long in learning the cause; for, after crossing the first hill beyond the town, the road became so abrupt and broken that we were obliged to dismount, and literally force our animals over the more difficult places. The difficulties of the route rather increased than diminished, as we proceeded, and the road was occasionally interrupted by almost vertical descents, impassable for mules, and only ascended and descended by pedestrians through the aid of rude ladders, formed of the notched trunks of trees, placed against the rocks. At such points, persons travelling with animals are obliged to make long circuits to avoid the obstacles in their course.

The accommodations for travellers on this route are much the same as those which I have described as existing on the more frequented roads of Peten, namely, simple sheds, open on all sides. Only here they seemed to be more solidly constructed, or rather they appeared firmer, as the climate is more favorable for their preservation. In nearly all of them we found a little image of Christ, fastened against one of the posts, hung round with dried flowers and fruits, the offerings of pious wayfarers before us. The flowers were always of the most beautiful varieties; but as for the fruits, I know not whether their rarity, their brilliant colors, or supposed medicinal virtues were the reasons which induced their selection.* In the vicinity of these rude *tambos* or public ranchos, and in fact near all settlements, are *dépôts* for *chicha*, a detestable beverage made by fermenting the juice of the sugar cane.† These

* The fruit of the *lycopersicum pyriforme*, called *chuchu* by the Indians, is used in Guatemala as a specific against colds and headaches. A ripe berry is selected and roasted in the ashes, and by the addition of a few drops of oil, the pulp is converted into a kind of ointment, which is introduced into the nostrils.

† This species of *chicha* is not the same as that manufactured in Mexico, which is made by an infusion of maize, when the saccharine matter commences to be developed by germination.

chicharias have an irresistible attraction for the Indians. They can rarely pass by them, so long as they have wherewith to purchase, by exchange or otherwise, a glass of their favorite beverage.

We were struck, on the first night after our departure from Lanquin, with the lowering of the temperature, and after the second day, with the change in the vegetation. The wooded tracts of country were now covered with ferns with woody stems; beautiful *rhexias* bordered our path, and vines with pink flowers twined up the trees in the midst of blooming fuchsias. Plants of the night-shade family became numerous, of large size, and arborescent. In the afternoon we reached a tract of table land covered with a gravelly clay soil, where the route was less broken and difficult, and our eyes roamed over beautiful reaches of level land, alternating with hills cultivated on all their slopes, and crowned with groups of trees, the last remains of the primitive forests. The landscape here is wild and solitary, without, however, possessing that severity of aspect which is the characteristic of elevated regions.

It was still daylight when we arrived at San Pedro Carcha, a town where, for the first time since we had left Yucatan, we observed any very marked indications of activity and of efficient public administration. The roads were in good order; the fields were separated by fences; tiled roofs took the place of thatched, and there were shops, and customers withal, indicating the existence of artificial wants and the means of supplying them. We began also to meet with those singular faces belonging only to the New World, where, if I may so express myself, the peculiar features of both the black and red races seem moulded in European clay. A population of twenty thousand souls, the owners of all the cultivated grounds between the town and Cahabon, regard San Pedro as their common centre and metropolis.

We did not stop long in San Pedro, but pushed on to the more important town of Coban. It was on a lovely morning in August when we first descried its churches perched on a commanding eminence, plainly visible but yet two leagues distant. Although the heat of the sun was great, the air was fresh and bracing, and with invigorated frame and exhilarated spirits, I thought I could never weary of gazing on the varied and pleasing prospects which were revealed at every turn in our path. Here the Rio Grande washed the foot of the *sierra* with its foaming current, and yonder it slept quietly in deep and bubble-speckled pools. Here was a field of maize bending its green leaves gracefully under the touch of the cool breeze, and in a little grove of their own were clustered together the graceful liquid amber trees, remarkable for their pyramidal shape and the richness of their foliage. They form a characteristic feature in the scenery of the *tierra templada*, that is to say of the most salubrious and interesting zone of equatorial America, and gave me great delight, since the change of climate which they indicated inaugurated for me a new era, in which health and a sense of security were to succeed languor, annoyance and peril. At the same time, I saw a change in the whole face of nature, in the appearance of the sky, the character of the plants and animals, and in the morals and aptitudes of the people. It was almost like visiting a new country.

The great diversity of the natural productions of the *tierra templada* invests travel here with peculiar charms. Here the trees and fruits of the tropics and those of the temperate zone may be seen springing up side by side, from a soil never consumed by the summer's sun, nor chilled by the frosts of winter. Thus, I remarked, in the gardens of San Pedro, pineapples flourishing beside bushes blushing with roses, and coffee-trees in flower intertwined with beautiful Indian cresses, with fringed petals, while arborescent yucas cast their shade over

bushes laden with blackberries in all respects similar to those of our own country.

The road near Coban is bordered with gardens surrounded by hedges, over which hang roses, jasamins, and *daturas*. Advancing between these fragrant hedge-rows, we caught occasional glimpses of little houses (*casas del campo*) nestling among thickets of verdure, until, suddenly clambering up a short and abrupt ascent, we emerged on the plaza or public square of Coban. On one side rose a church, lofty and of imposing appearance, while in front was a line of ruins of ancient and apparently once magnificent edifices. The other sides of the square were lined by low colonnades facing the shops of a few merchants and artisans. The pavement was broken, grass grew between the stones, and altogether the square wore an aspect of desertion and decay which produced a most unfavorable impression on our minds. We looked around us for divergent streets lined with houses, but none were visible, and we accordingly kept on our way, thinking that possibly we had not reached the town. At this moment we met a tall *Ladino*, wrapped closely in a woollen cloak, such as is worn during the coldest days of winter. I addressed him,

"*Amigo*, if you are from Coban, will you tell us where the town lies?"

The question evidently surprised him. He hesitated for a moment, and then, as if satisfied from the expression of my countenance, that I had asked the question in good faith, he replied, sweeping his arm around in a circle,

"Señor, the town is around you!"

And he was right. But how can I convey an idea of a town of twelve thousand souls, built on an elevation, and yet almost invisible? I shall make the attempt, however, but with little hope of success.

The houses of Coban, for it cannot be denied that such exist, are low and covered with tiles. A corridor, supported

on wooden columns, or pilasters of masonry, extends along the front. From the highest point of the town the streets descend by a gentle slope into the surrounding valleys through an almost impenetrable mass of verdure. Every dwelling, with its court-yard, its little garden, and its adjacent cultivated field, is curtained behind a gigantic hedge, which separates it from the public road. A variety of nettle (*ortie*),* tall, with immense prickly leaves of a rich green color, makes up a principal part of these hedges, and prohibits incautious approach. It is propagated from cuttings, and its growth is so rapid that at the end of a few years the stalks become veritable trunks, which interlace so as to form a grey wall covered with mosses and lichens, and equally picturesque and serviceable. Most of the streets of Coban are bordered with hedges of this description, which form natural arcades, sombre and continuous. The city is therefore enveloped in a net-work of verdure, the meshes of which are so close that even its public edifices are invisible except from their immediate neighborhood.

I have said that Coban contains a population of twelve thousand souls, two thousand of which are Spaniards and *Ladinos*, and ten thousand Indians. These latter in no respect resemble those of Cahabon. Active, enterprising and industrious, they possess the essential elements of civilization. This great difference is, no doubt, due in large part to the difference of climate. It cannot be denied that the circumstances in which man exercises his faculties have a powerful influence on his development. Hence it is that the American race presents so many different aspects in Guatemala, which is a region of small extent, it is true, but very much diversified in surface, and where the transitions are as sudden as they are great. The Indians of Coban, favored with a delightful climate, readily engage in agriculture, and also pursue many mechanical avocations. There are among them good carpenters,

* *Opuntia ficus-indica*, or possibly a columnar *Cereus?*—T.

dyers, weavers and tailors. They rarely work on their own account, however, but are employed by the *Ladinos*, who conduct the whole trade of the country. Indefatigable travellers, they go to Sacapulas in search of palm-leaf hats, to Quezaltenango for woollen goods, to Yzabal for their crockery, and they carry for sale, even to Nicaragua, the hammocks which they knit from the threads of the *pita* or agave, and dye with brilliant colors.

On Sundays and feast days these honest artisans appear in gala dress, wrapped in ample woollen cloaks, which contrast strongly with their white pantaloons, and wearing tall black straw hats, resembling our own in size and shape. As they defile before him, the traveller can scarely realize that they belong to the same race with the indolent, improvident, and brutalized inhabitants of the *tierras calientes*.

The women are equally industrious. They spin and weave cotton, embroider, and knit with taste and skill, besides being tolerable cooks and tidy housewives. They wear a national head-dress, which is pleasing in effect, and which I have never observed elsewhere. Their hair, of which they have a profusion, is braided with amaranth-colored woollen cords, of eight or ten yards in length, frequently ornamented with tassels at the ends, and falling in festoons to their ankles. All, without distinction, wear a blue checkered cotton skirt, to which they add, when they appear in public, a short chemise.

The Spanish element being very small in Coban, the *Ladinos* constitute nearly a sixth part of the population. Superior to the Indians in intelligence, but less industrious and moral, the *Ladinos* keep themselves quite apart, and affect the greatest disdain for the very class from which they themselves originally sprung. This intermediate caste, in Central America, is not famed for its virtues; destitute of education, and without moral elevation or fixed principles, it has inherited none of the good qualities of its progenitors, but only their

vices. Nevertheless, they live peaceably enough upon the fruits of their labor in Coban, and limit their ambition to domineering over the Indians, who respond by most cordially repelling their airs of superiority.

The province of Vera Paz is perhaps the most interesting division of Guatemala, and Coban, in respect of natural history, is its most favored city. Not only is the climate salubrious and the soil productive, but the people are endowed with an aptitude and good will rarely to be met with in Spanish countries. The delightful temperature, the serenity of the sky, the aspect of the country—everything favors thought and study, and disposes one to industry. It is with the greatest pleasure that I recall to mind the days passed in that quiet town, where the annoyances of my wandering life were so soon forgotten. How often do I see, in my dreams, the little white house which I occupied with my faithful attendant; the myrtles growing in a corner of the garden and diffusing their fragrance on the evening air; the blue lizards racing along the hedges,* and the brilliantly colored insects which buzzed around my light, and afforded me such infinite amusement! My life here, perhaps, was rather too lonely, but it was one of occupation and was sustained by hope, two great requisites of happiness. I received the greatest kindness and attention on the part of my hosts. Every day I met with new productions of nature, whose treasures here seemed as inexhaustible as my own desires. The absence of disturbing rumors, vain illusions, and anxious solicitudes, left my mind open to the free enjoyment of that repose which it so much needed, and that communion with Nature in which my delights so largely consisted. Nevertheless, one melancholy thought cast its shadow on my spirit. In the midst of the fluctuations to

* The *tropidolepis formosus*, Dum., is very numerous in the gardens of Coban. This lizard belongs to the tribe of iguanas, and is of a beautiful blue color, its back shading on copper.

which human affairs are subject, nothing, alas! is less stable than happiness. For seven long months I had been without news from my family, and until my arrival in Guatemala I could not hope for letters. The state of uncertainty and expectation in which I lived gradually unsettled my tranquillity and embittered my enjoyments. In a word, after much hesitation and many secret contests, I finally tore myself away, with the deepest regrets, from a spot which to me was full of attractions.

The basin of Coban is an *El Dorado* for the ornithologist. Even the children go about armed with a *sarbacan*, or blowtube, an instrument which they use very dexterously, and which they have inherited from their earliest ancestors.* There exist in the town bird fanciers by profession, who rear many curious birds in cages, particularly singing birds, which are highly prized by the people of Coban. They understand skinning and preserving them, by stuffing, remarkably well. The queen of the woods is the *quetzal.* All the way from the frontiers of Tabasco I had heard of the marvellous beauty of this bird. My curiosity was so much excited by what was told me that I endeavored, but in vain, to classify it from the descriptions. It is now, however, pretty well known, having been within the last few years extensively introduced into European collections. Indeed, the demand for it has been so great that, unless it soon diminishes, this magnificent bird must disappear from the forests of Guatemala. Its plumage is remarkable for its brilliancy. On the back it is of silken fineness, and of a metallic, emerald green, shading on gold. Under the breast it is of a rich purple. But it is the tail of the bird which constitutes its prin-

* "*Taladran sutilmente las zabratenas con puas muy largas.*"—Herrara, Dec. iv., l. x., c. 14. Montezuma did not disdain to use the *sarbacan.* Among the presents which he sent to Cortez were a dozen of these implements, painted with considerable skill, as also a game bag of golden thread, with balls of the same metal. See Cortez, in *Lorenzana*, l. ii., p. 100.

cipal beauty. This is seldom less than a yard in length, and consists of four or five long and drooping feathers of the most vivid green.*

The plumage of the *quetzal* is most brilliant in the month of March, and it is then that the hunters enter the forest in its pursuit. The hunt is kept up until the season of pairing, when the male bird loses the plumes of its tail. Every year from two to three hundred skins are sent from Coban, where they are worth about half a dollar, to Guatemala, where they bring three dollars. For the most part, these find their way to Europe, where they are badly stuffed and set up as representatives of the species. The ancient inhabitants, if history may be credited, caught these birds in snares, and after having plucked out their beautiful tails, set them at liberty again. To kill them was a crime punishable by law.† At this early period it is said the plumes of the *quetzal* constituted the only article of export from Vera Paz—a poor country, covered with forests and difficult of access. Much sought after by artists, they served to set off the curious and splendid feather mosaics which so greatly excited the admiration of the conquerors.

The environs of Coban abound in terrestrial shells, which are found in the cavities of the rocks, or creeping on the mosses of the woods. The largest specimens yet found in America, of the genus *helix*, *cylindrella*, and *glandina*, exist in the recesses of the mountains of Vera Paz. There is one thing worthy of remark while on this subject, namely, that the Indians have a separate and distinct name for each kind of mollusc.‡ The *Guarani* dialect, spoken by certain Brazilian tribes, furnishes a

* M. Morelet, following Spix, classes the *quetzal*, *Trogan pavoninus*, while Gould and others denominate it *Trogan resplendens*.—T.

† Herrara, Dec. iii., l. x., c. ii.

‡ Thus they call *chotch*, the *h. Ghiesbreghtii* of Nyst; *tsitsib*, the *h. eximia* Pfr.; *sapitan*, the *gh. fusiformis* Pfr.; *chulupik*, the *cyl. decollata* Nyst, etc.

similar illustration, for in that idiom there are fifteen words by which to designate as many varieties of bees. This is, however, very natural; for it is by no means strange that the attention of man, being early concentrated on the objects which surround him, and which are connected with his modes of life in the way of food, should remark their minutest peculiarities, and assign them distinct names. Those objects, on the other hand, from which he derives no benefit long remain confounded under a vague and general denomination. Thus the ancient languages, the general richness of which cannot be disputed, are, in respect of the natural sciences, extremely poor.

I never truly appreciated the pleasures of the chase except during my travels in Central America. True, in a new country, covered with the most luxuriant vegetation, and full of rare and unknown animals, as, for example, in Vera Paz, this pursuit is invested with more than its ordinary charms. The attraction which I found in this sport arose not less from my passionate admiration of nature than the curiosity with which her productions inspired me. In my first excursion in the environs of Coban I was accompanied by Fabricio, my host, an athletic young man, a good shot, and acquainted with every inch of the country. We took with us provisions for three days. Some hunters in the town joined us, as also a number of boys more accustomed to roaming about the country than to attending school. We spent our first night in a high valley, two leagues from the town. Before morning we suffered considerably from cold, although the weather was dry, and we kept up a good fire. Snow never falls on these heights; but in December and January the plants growing in exposed situations are frequently nipped by frost, and their blossoms blighted.

The forests, under the shadow of which we awakened, impressed me with such lively feelings of admiration that my recent remembrances of the *tierra caliente* were at once effaced

from my mind. Everything that I saw around me, in its minutest detail, was new; all was picturesque and magnificent. In no other part of the world have I ever seen the humble mosses, lichens, and *lycopodia* so beautifully and luxuriantly developed. Every inch of ground was covered with these parasitic plants, the strength and vigor of which do not here, as in our own country, indicate the decadence of the tree around which they are entwined. In the midst of this wilderness of cellular plants, which cover the steep slopes of the mountain with a fresh and velvet-like carpet, spring up hundreds of tree ferns, almost as high and straight, and infinitely more graceful than the palm. Their dark and reticulated trunks resemble the skin of a serpent. Their delicate foliage is swayed by every passing breeze, and falls in graceful umbels beneath the shadows of gigantic oaks, of which there are at least fifty varieties in Vera Paz, some of them bearing enormous acorns.

It is in the depths of these forests that the *quetzal*, here called *couroucou*, perched among the branches of some tall tree, reposes during the greater portion of the day, or silently lies in wait for the insects upon which he feeds. No sound betrays his presence except during the time of pairing, when the woods are vocal with his sonorous, melancholy notes. He is not gregarious in his habits, but manifests the most tender attachment for his mate, and shares with her all the labors of incubation; at least the Indians affirm that frequently during that period, the long tail of the male bird may be seen issuing from the cavity where the pair have established their nest. This circumstance appears to have impressed the historian of Guatemala, who, however, gives it quite a different interpretation. "It would appear," he says, very innocently, "that the *quetzales* are aware of the value of their tails, for they take great care in providing two issues to their nest, entering by the one and quitting it by the other, in order to avoid any

accident to the most precious portion of their plumage."* The reader can choose for himself between these different representations. Among our companions was a man who could imitate to perfection the plaintive note of the *couroucou*, a talent possessed in a greater or less degree by all the hunters of Coban. By this means two males were attracted toward us, both of which we secured. But as these birds, at this season, are divested of their principal ornament, I interceded for them, and put a stop to their wanton destruction. We afterwards shot a monkey of the alüate variety, covered with soft, dark fur. We cooked him for supper, and I tasted a portion of his flesh, which seemed to me tough and dry, whence I deduced that the famous roast monkey, so highly praised by Don Diego and Morin, was indebted for its principal merit to the fact of the scarcity of our provisions and the good appetites of its consumers. During the evening the most discordant noises awakened the echoes of the forest, which I learned were made by the owners of the plantations beneath us, in order to frighten away the foxes,† at the moment when they leave their retreats, after sundown, to devastate the plantations.

The mountains surrounding Coban rise gently from the table land, and form a chain of considerable uniformity. They are covered with a gravelly clay soil, like the lower valleys, and with a thick layer of vegetable deposits. From these heights my companions called my attention to a bluish cloud to the south-west, which they informed me was the summit of the *volcan de Agua*, situated near the city of Guatemala. A most interesting spectacle awaited us on our descent from the mountain. While we were still in the shadow of the woods, we caught sight of the valley spread out at our feet, bathed in a flood of light. I distinguished fields of maize alternating with pasturage, and streams winding their way

* Juarros, trat. 1., c. iii. p. 30.

† *Vulpes tricolor*, Cuv., the *tepescuinte* of the Indians.

through the wide-spread verdure, and around the feet of gentle eminences, which they seemed to cherish in their embrace. In the centre of the picture rose the white church of Coban on a throne of emerald. Framing in the whole were the hills, cultivated to their very tops, and crowned with pines; and still above these stood the great mountain chains, as if propping up the distant horizon. This magnificently grand landscape could not fail to inspire me with an enthusiasm unapproachable by any feeling except that of gratitude to that supreme Intelligence which had endowed me with faculties capable of appreciating the glories of his wonderful creation.

The climate of Coban is damp but temperate. Much rain falls during the year, but in small quantities at a time. After a shower, the level portions of the town are covered with miniature lakes, and the streets, on the declivities of its site, become the channels of temporary torrents. These conditions, however, are but slightly inconvenient for the greater part of the inhabitants, who regard all kinds of shoes as effeminate superfluities. During the month of August, the period of my visit, the thermometer stood at 59° of Fahrenheit, at eight o'clock in the morning, at 64° at mid-day, and at 61° at sundown. The maximum range was 68°, the minimum 51°, giving an average mean of 59° 9′, for the month. The temperature varies but little from these figures during the entire year.

I was therefore in no small degree surprised, in such a climate, to hear of a malady in Coban, which is generally considered as belonging to hot countries. The dysentery rages during the months of July and August, and is particularly fatal to the Indian population who do not understand its treatment. The *Ladinos* take better care of themselves, and besides dieting, make use, with considerable benefit, of the astringent bark of the pomegranate.

The table lands of Coban abound in excellent fruits and

vegetables, among which the *avocates* and *injertos* are highly esteemed.* But horticultural industry has made but slight progress in these mountains. At the time we were there, we found only oranges and *limas*,† the latter a juicy fruit, the perfume of which is almost entirely concentrated in the skin, and granadillas. The granadilla is a green fruit about the size of an egg, the tough and smooth skin of which covers a gelatinous pulp, slightly acidulous, but very refreshing and palatable. Every one, of course, has heard of these climbing plants which decorate the gardens of tropical America, where the peculiarity of their growth has obtained for them the appellation of *passion flowers*.

One day I was shown a fruit resembling small apples, having a strong odor of roses. These rose-apples, *manzanas rosas*, as they are called in the country, belong to a species of *myrtaceæ*.‡ The flower of this tree is composed of innumerable stamens, which fall in sheafs on the calix. The pistil is very long and continues after fructification.

The bananna also grows here; but does not attain very great perfection. The coffee tree thrives vigorously, and yields abundantly. Every garden contains a little patch for family use. By the side of these tropical productions is the quince, which comes to maturity during the month of August.

A fruitful soil, great diversity of climate, and productions of the greatest variety and value, are among the advantages which Nature offers to man in Vera Paz. The commerce of the country is in its trade in maize, vanilla, sarsaparilla, and perhaps I may add a few articles of the thread of the *agave*, manufactured chiefly in the town of Coban. Cotton formerly constituted the principal article of exportation, but this branch of trade has sensibly declined since the cultivation of cotton was commenced in the western departments of the republic.

* *Lucuma salicifolia*, Kunth.

† *Citrus medica*, L. *Var. dulcis.*

‡ *Eugenia jambos*, L.

The shortest road between Flores and Guatemala, runs through Coban. It crosses the great chain of the Chisec mountains which extend from east to west, but they do not present any permanent obstacles to the passage of beasts of burden, as does those of Cahabon. Still, the numerous torrents which furrow it, and which, during three fourths of the year, diffuse their waters over the neighboring valleys, explain the neglect in which it remains. Chisec is a wild region, where, in 1803, some disaffected Indians took refuge, at the time when the taxes were increased. They now number, it is said, five hundred souls. Every year, when the drought has rendered the roads practicable, an alcalde from Coban makes his way to their fastnesses, gathers together the scattered population, and collects the children who await the sacrament of baptism, and the couples who have forestalled that of matrimony by a previous union. The Church, like an indulgent mother, receives them into her bosom, and sends them back to their mountain homes, after having accommodated all the little moral difficulties that may have existed previously.

Let us stop here, for a moment, to pay tribute to the memory of that illustrious bishop who devoted his whole career to the defence of an oppressed race, and who first planted the standard of the cross in Vera Paz. He stands forth as a noble example of practical charity. Animated by the loftiest enthusiasm, and possessed of the tenderest of human hearts, his deeds cast a mild and consoling light over the sombre picture of the Conquest.

"Providence," said Las Casas, "only wishes to operate upon misguided souls through the teachings of the gospel; it has a horror of unjust wars undertaken in its name; it wishes neither captives nor slaves to bow before its altars. Persuasion and gentle treatment are sufficient to win the hearts of the most obstinate to the shrine of the Deity." These words

produced a smile upon the lips of the incredulous secular chiefs around him, who replied to his exhortations with the monosyllable, "Try!"*

And he did try! In 1536, forty years after the discovery of the new world, his indefatigable zeal led him to Guatemala, where he heard of the province of *Tuzulutlan*, called by the Spaniards *Tierra de Guerra* (land of war), because of its obstinate resistance to their arms. So difficult a conquest appeared to Las Casas worthy of his mission; he resolved here to make trial of his principles, "without other arms," say the old historians, "than the double-edged sword of the divine Word."† He only stipulated, as the condition of his mediation, that none of his countrymen should be permitted to enter the country for five years, and as a recompense, in the event of his being successful, that it should never be enfeoffed to any of them.

We will not follow the pious adventurer in his pacific crusade, in company with the Fray Pedro de Angulo, who, in 1560,‡ was the first bishop of the province. It is sufficient for us to remember that the savage tribes of *Tuzulutlan*, subdued by the meekness, the patience, and the evangelical virtues of the two apostles, little by little exchanged their native barbarism for the more gentle manners and industrious habits which they preserve to this day. To be brief, at the expiration of a few years the name of *Tierra de Guerra* (land of war) was forgotten, and that of *Vera Paz* (true peace) was substituted; the new designation being confirmed by the Emperor Charles V. to perpetuate the remembrance of a triumph, the better assured because it was not founded on violence.

* See the Memoir of Las Casas against Sepulveda.

† Herrara, Dec. iv. l. x. c. 13.

‡ The bishopric of Vera Paz, established in 1559, was in 1607 annexed to that of Guatemala.

Coban became the centre of action of the Dominicans, and political capital of the province. It obtained the arms of a city of the first rank. At the top of its shield, the rainbow glowed in a field of azure, with the following motto from the ninth chapter of Genesis: "I do set my bow in the cloud"—an allusion to the new alliance of the two worlds. Lower down, the dove, bearing an olive branch, hovered over a globe covered with the heraldric insignia of the order. The influence of a regular clergy, adhering to fixed principles and instituting a uniform discipline, of course greatly seconded governmental action in Vera Paz. The fathers, above all, endeavored to inculcate in their flocks respect for authority, and so great was their success, that this region of country still continues to be the most peaceable of the State, and the most submissive to the requirements of duty. In the minds of the people of Coban the remembrance of the Dominicans is closely united with that of the colonial administration, to which they always refer with expressions of gratitude. It was in truth the most fortunate epoch in their history.

Since that period the political revolutions and the change of the seat of civil authority to Salama, have struck a mortal blow at the dearest interests of their city. Its public edifices have fallen into decay, and the various routes of communication have ceased to be kept up. Industrial activity has slackened, the means of education have disappeared, social ties have insensibly become relaxed, and everything in fact, both materially and morally, instead of progressing, has subsided into decadence.

Coban still retains a remnant of that mystic devotion which has survived the destruction of the convents. At the corner of every street is a chapel containing an effigy of Christ, enveloped in a mantle of white linen, leaving only the extremities uncovered. Everywhere are to be seen crosses or other symbols of worship, and the interiors of the houses are

full of religious images, relics, and crucifixes. At the first chime of the Angelus, every one kneels and murmurs a prayer; but we must not place too much reliance on these outward manifestations, which proceed less from piety than from habit or custom. The principal church is a large edifice, on which the hand of time has left many sad traces. I regretted deeply that it contained no portrait of Las Casas. That of Fray Pedro de Angulo, who died in 1560, adorns its walls and it bears an inscription testifying to his zeal in favor of the Indians. The interior decorations of the church can hardly be considered in good taste. The eye is distracted by a multitude of pious images, angels, saints, Madonnas, sculptures, paintings, gildings, all of which are scattered about with a luxurious and strange confusion which recalls the freaks of the oriental imagination. These accessories are highly admired and prized by the Indians, who have no respect for a badly-dressed saint. All the prejudices of race are respected here, and not the slightest pretext is afforded for jealousy between the whites, blacks, and Indians. The African, for example, need not blush to kneel at the feet of a Christ with a visage as dark as his own!

Another church, called El Calvario, occupies the top of an isolated hillock. This edifice is white, and shaded by great pines, produces a strange effect when illuminated by the rays of the setting sun. All around it spreads a vast cemetery, which is rarely visited by a people whose lightness of spirit induces forgetfulness. A beautiful and picturesque road leads from the city to El Calvario. I frequently felt myself attracted to this spot, and it soon became my favorite resort. The dreamy and melancholy air pervading it communicated a certain sadness and gentleness of feeling to my spirit, which were not without their charms. It appeared to me, when musing here, that I was less distant from my home, and less of a stranger to what was around me than elsewhere; a feeling which I at first

imagined instinctive, and which I attributed to the proximity of that great leveller, the grave, but of which I soon discovered the true source, which is far more consoling, since it consists in Faith.

Now that I am about to close my chapter on Coban—the quiet and delightful spot where some of the happiest hours of my life were spent—I feel a strange longing to take the reader, who has followed me thus far, into my confidence, and I cannot resist the flood of memories which are welling up from the depths of my heart. Facts often present a better picture of the moral aspects of a country than the longest homilies. I scarcely dare invoke this consideration, and yet I will not reject it, if you, oh reader! be willing to admit its value.

I occupied a neat little house in the town of Coban, in the midst of a garden filled with coffee, orange and pimiento trees, which, during the day, afforded a delightful shade, and in the evening gave out a delicious perfume of cloves. This little house belonged to a family composed of three sisters and a brother, who lived opposite in a larger dwelling, separated from the others by one of those avenues of trees which I have already described. They were called Indians; why, I do not know. Perhaps because of the kindly relations which they kept up with the aborigines, whose language they spoke with the utmost fluency. But a certain delicacy of shape, fine, silken hair, and an intelligence well cultivated, denoted, particularly in the women, that they were not pure Indians, but had an infusion of foreign blood.

The most perfect harmony existed in this family. The eldest sister was perhaps thirty-five years of age. Active and industrious, she divided her time between domestic duties and devotional exercises. She attended to the business matters of the little family, while the young brother cultivated a piece of land, situated a short distance up the mountain, for their common use.

The second sister was a girl of about twenty-eight years, rather pleasing in appearance, although inclining to *embonpoint*. She was of a gentle, amiable disposition, and, from choice, had resolved upon a life of celibacy. She attended more especially to the household duties, and in the fulfilment of her task displayed a spirit of method, order and neatness rarely met with in Spanish countries. The youngest, Juana, was about sixteen years of age, and did not in any particular resemble the elder sisters. She displayed a strange mixture of indifference and vivacity, of curiosity and carelessness, of wildness, cultivation and delicacy, proceeding evidently from a mixed ancestry. In her the Indian element certainly predominated. Her face usually wore an expression of melancholy, but when gay and animated all the blood of the tropics seemed coursing through her veins.

Juana's intelligence appeared to be less flexible and less developed than that of her sisters. With her, instinct was all powerful. Her principal charm consisted in her ingenuous nature, which betrayed her slightest emotions with spontaneous vivacity. I was on terms of intimacy with the family, and observed with the greater interest the little incidents which threw out, in bold relief, this innocent nature, inasmuch as I had so long been deprived of the delights of domestic life.

The young girl, in her turn, was not insensible to the unusual movement which our arrival occasioned. The presence of two strangers in quest of novelty had effectually broken in upon the quiet monotony of her existence. Less industrious than her sisters, whose almost maternal tenderness excused her idleness, she spent most of her time in our society. Our collections, our effects, our daily occupations, were so many novelties appealing to her curiosity. She enquired about all things without attaching importance to any. Her nature was a most impressible one, but she was so changeable and so im-

pulsive that nothing left any very deep traces on her mind. I doubted whether she was capable of loving; she was certainly in perfect ignorance of the mysteries of the human heart and the realities of life. Seated in careless grace under the myrtles of the garden, her head resting upon her hand, her tresses unbound, and reaching almost to the ground, she would follow, for whole hours, the movements of my pencil without the slightest symptom of weariness; but hardly was the drawing finished before she would snatch it from me, and bound away like a fawn, to show it to her sisters and enjoy their surprise and admiration.

After Juana had become my almost constant companion, life wore for me a new aspect. Her presence invested the minutest objects with a certain charm; it was the ray of sunlight which gives warmth and soul to the picture. To correct her ideas, reply to her questions, and develop her intelligence, became my favorite occupation. I was surprised at not having previously remarked the harmonious accents of her voice, the beauty of her hair, the flexibility of her waist, the air of picturesque grace which pervaded her whole person. I had at first looked upon her only as a simple child; had she already become a dangerous woman? A wise man would not have hesitated; he would have escaped from the fascination without stopping to fathom its mystery. Alas! I must, in all humility, confess that such an idea never entered my mind!

Obeying her natural impulses, and seeming unconscious of the existence elsewhere of social distinctions and conventionalities, Juana kept me in a constant state of perplexity. Sometimes I thought that she loved me, but at others this notion vanished. A look of indifference, some trivial action, or a symptom of coldness, dissipated the illusion. The pain which I then felt was greatly softened by a generous impulse of my heart. After all, what were my intentions in regard to her? Should I bring trouble and shame upon this family,

in which I had been so hospitably welcomed? Should I not rather fly from the spot while it was yet time? I decided upon taking my departure, yet day after day I lingered, quaffing still deeper the delicious poison of her presence.

One morning the young girl rapped at my door, bringing with her a superb bouquet, which she had just gathered in the garden, to make up for the loss of some flowers which I had dropped the day previous in fording a stream. It would have been an act of ingratitude, to have explained to her the particular interest which I felt in the simple field flowers which I had lost. "This," said she, "is the *vergonzosa*. See, *señor* how sensitive it is! I have scarcely touched it, and yet it is already shrivelled up!" She showed me a sensitive plant, the leaves of which, one after another, had contracted under the touch of her fingers. "This one," she continued, "we call the passion flower; here are the spear, the nails, and the crown of thorns; it weeps every Good Friday," she added, with a pretty air of mystery, "at the hour when our Saviour expired." "As to that," I interrupted, smiling, "I am a little dubious about it!" "You do not believe me, then? Well, ask my sister, Teresa!" Then suddenly changing her tone and manner, "Is it really true, *señor*, that you intend to leave us, as Morin affirmed last night?" At this unexpected enquiry, I was somewhat startled, and did not answer. Putting down her bouquet, and taking my hand within her own, she continued, with an affectionate expression which I had never before seen upon her face, "Are you not content here? Why will you go to Guatemala?" And her lustrous dark eyes were turned on me with a glance which thrilled my very soul.

Alas! how fragile a thing is virtue. I had long been vibrating between the hopes and fears of success, and had determined upon remaining silent; yet here, at the first temptation, my secret was about to be divulged. The trial was a

severe one; the attitude of Juana, the emotion of her voice, her look in which I read a prayer, all intoxicated and subdued me, and gliding my arm around her waist, I exclaimed,

"In the name of Heaven, Juana, may I hope that you love me?"

"Oh yes, you may well believe that I do," she answered unhesitatingly.

"And you wish me to remain at Coban?"

"Of course I do," she said, bending her head until her ebon tresses grazed my cheek, "at least you will not go until after my marriage?"

Her words fell with a chill on my heart. Mechanically, I withdrew my arm from her waist, and my hand disengaged itself from her clasp. The young girl cast on me a look of astonishment, not unmixed with anxiety, yet she was evidently ignorant of the blow she had dealt.

"What is the matter, *señor?*" she exclaimed, in a voice made tremulous by apprehension.

I made no answer. My tender illusions were rudely dispelled. I rose, opened the window, and took a few steps, incapable of a single coherent thought or expression. At last, by a painful effort I recovered my self-possession, reseated myself and decided upon my course of action.

"Then you are about to marry, Juana?"

"Yes, *señor*," she replied, lowering her eyes with an air of instinctive delicacy.

"When is the ceremony to take place?"

"In about a month, *señor:* my brother Fabricio will not be at liberty until the harvest is over."

"But you are not about to marry your brother, I suppose?"

"Oh, *señor!*" and a hearty laugh betrayed her pearl-like teeth. "Fabricio and I are to be married on the same day."

"Well, and who is your betrothed?" I inquired, assuming an air of indifference.

"My betrothed, *señor?* Why, have you not heard of Don Santiago Corientes?"

"He is certainly not a very ardent lover," I could not help observing, "for I do not once remember having seen him at your house."

"This is not surprising," she rejoined hastily, "since he has been at Salama these two months."

"And you love this young man, Juana?"

"*Señor?*"

"I understand. As for him, of course he cannot but love you?"

"Certainly, *señor*, since he wishes to marry me."

"Well then, all is for the best."

I opened a case, and drew from it a coral necklace, which I threw around her neck. "Here, Juana, is my marriage gift, for on the day of your wedding I shall be far away. Be happy, dear child," I added, pressing a kiss on her forehead, "and sometimes remember the poor traveller in your prayers."

And here perhaps the indulgent reader will permit me to anticipate events, and give the sequel of the little love episode of Juana and the Stranger. A month after leaving Coban, and having, in the meantime, reached Guatemala, I was one day surprised in my garden by an apparition, having the lank figure and all the peculiar lineaments of my ancient fellow-traveller, honest Diégo de la Cueva, who had accompanied me through the forest between Tenosique and Peten, and who was reported to me at the latter place, as having died, in the odor of sanctity, at the village of Sacluc. I was speechless with astonishment as the familiar figure approached me. It ad-

vanced with a dignified step and ceremonious manner, bearing in one hand a hat, and in the other a little bundle.

"I perceive that you are surprised, Señor *caballero*," observed the apparition, as it paused in front of me, "and this is an evident sign that your worship has not forgotten me."

"And is that really *you*, Don Diego, and are you sure that you are of this world?" I exclaimed, as soon as I had recovered my powers of utterance.

"At your service, *caballero!*" he responded, with a grave and respectful bow. "I was myself for a long time in doubt on the subject."

On hearing these words, which carried conviction with them, I approached Don Diego, gave him the benefit of a close inspecion, and congratulated him as befitted the occasion. I then begged him to gratify my curiosity, touching his adventures since we parted, while awaiting the preparation of the dinner to which I invited him. "I have no monkey to offer you," I added smiling, "but I hope that you will be able to make a meal without it."

"Would to heaven, your worship," he replied, with a deep-drawn sigh, "would to heaven that I had met with even a monkey on the infernal road over which I have just travelled! I should not then so often have had cause to regret the excellent fare I enjoyed while journeying in your company."

The compliment appeared to me exaggerated, but perhaps he was sincere. We seated ourselves in the shade. Diego put down his bundle, asked for some tobacco, rolled up a *cigarette* and commenced the recital of his adventures, or, perhaps I should say, misfortunes. He had long lain at death's door, in the village of Sacluc, where I had left him, but his good constitution finally triumphed over the disease. As soon as he was convalescent, he started after us; but when he reached Flores, he found that we had left that town five days before. The corregidor, on learning his history, kindly gave

him shelter, until the departure of the courier for Guatemala, with whom he made the journey. He ended his narrative by imitating the cry of the *hocco*, of which he had made a careful study on the way.

Morin here joined us, and his astonishment was scarcely less than mine. Diego repeated his adventures to him, while I glanced over a letter from the corregidor, in which, even through the ceremonious forms of Spanish politeness, there was much that was kind and genuine. Our ancient travelling companion having reached Coban, without once getting off our track, had soon discovered the house which we had occupied during our stay. He regretted being unable to pass more than one day there, for the hospitality of the ladies was such as to efface from his mind even the agreeable recollections of Flores.

At this stage of his story, Don Diego thought it requisite to assume an air of mystery, which brought a smile to my lips. And when I enquired if he had any message from me, he opened his vest and displayed a bag of blue cloth suspended around his neck like an amulet. This bag contained a letter, which he ceremoniously presented to me, and of which the following is a literal translation:

"SEÑOR AND FRIEND:

"Since your departure we have had a great grief. God has taken to himself the soul of poor Santiago. He rests in peace at Salama. If you still love Juana, come to her as soon as you receive this. In five days you can be in Coban, and oh! how happy I shall be to see you! Fabricio will accompany you to the *sierra*, where he has seen some beautiful green birds. My sister has been saving seeds for you, and I have collected some beautiful shells from the garden hedge. May Heaven ever watch over you!

"JUANA."

"I would not have lost this precious letter," said Don Diego, "for a hundred dubloons!" and he laid his hand upon his skinny breast, as if to render the assertion more impressive.

Of course I had not a doubt of his sincerity, and praised his honesty, while promising in turn to look after his interests. I finally succeeded in obtaining for him employment with a merchant in Guatemala. As he was intelligent, apt, and of pleasing address, he soon insinuated himself into the good graces of his patron, who finally entrusted him with a little stock of wares for sale in Nicaragua. He never saw him afterwards. The story ran that in crossing a lagoon near Realejo, he had been made away with by an alligator, but I have always been a little skeptical on this point, thinking it more probable that he had made away with the merchandise!

XI.

THE CORDILLERAS.

Route from Coban to Guatemala—Difficulties of a start—Meteorological phenomena—Town of Santa Cruz—Flowers—Town of Taltick—*Tierra helada*—The Doña Ana Guzman—A Taltick school and schoolmaster—Scanty fare—Sybaritic beds—Valley of *Patal*—Santa Rosa—Mountain roads—Salama—A *fiesta*—Sugar estate and refinery—A deserter—A caravansery—Work and wages—Armed travellers—Rare plants—*Solfatares*—Hot springs—A precocious child—Motagua river—Suspension bridge—Pendant mosses—Storm and suffering—Glimpse of Guatemala—Fording rivers—Chinauta—Ascent of the plateau of Guatemala—Entrance into the city—Gloomy prospects—A good Samaritan—New use for a table cover.

THE *camino real* from Coban to Guatemala, as I have already said, crosses the great mountain chain of the Cordilleras at its lowest point, six thousand five hundred feet above the level of the sea.* But although it is called the royal road, it has never been traversed by the wheels of any vehicle whatever. The bare feet of the Indians, and the mule's hoof alone have left their traces on it, and so it seems probable it will continue to be for generations to come. The aspect of the country, its climate, and the forms of vegetation which it supports on its surface, vary equally with the prodigious variations in its altitudes. At one point it rises in cool and nebulous plateaus, while in another, close at hand, it subsides in hot and humid valleys.

It had been decided that we were to leave Coban at an early hour for the village of Taltick, distant eight leagues, in order to reach there before the time when, at this period of the year, the afternoon rain sets in. But the sun was high in the heavens before our escort made its appearance. Under

* The culminating points of this chain are here at least one thousand feet higher than the most elevated peaks of the Jura Alps.

pretext of purchasing provisions, which they procure from their own households without any disbursement, the Indians never fail to exact their pay in advance, so that the traveller is afterwards entirely in their power.* This custom, to which one is forced to submit, has other inconveniences. For instance, when at last our guides did make their appearance, three of them were already drunk, and as we proceeded, one left his *machete* in pawn for more liquor, at a wayside *chicheria*, and a little further on another did the same. I fancy they would finally have pledged my own effects had I not discovered what was going on, and put an end to their proceedings.

The route which we followed rises progressively over the slope of the *sierras*, and meanders under the shadow of the liquid amber trees, the pyramidal tops of which mingle with those of the pines. Numberless flowers, among which I found a beautiful *rheria* of carmine color, enamel the sides of the road, and invest them with a pleasing interest to the traveller, and an absorbing one to the naturalist.

After reaching a considerable altitude, we observed an unfortunate change in the atmosphere. Great masses of clouds floating off to the northward, often shut out the sun from view. They seemed to be swept on by a strong upper current, and to bank themselves up around the tops of the mountains. After a while they began to subside into the valleys below us, shutting the country from view beneath their fleecy folds. Directly they began to pulsate with electricity, and we heard the peals of thunder echoing beneath our feet. As they gradually discharged themselves they rose again up the sides of the

* The distrust of the Indians, it must be confessed, finds a perfect justification in their past experience. This is what Thomas Gage says, who visited Guatemala at the beginning of the seventeenth century: "The traveller has a right to select from every village as many Indians as are necessary to lead his mules and carry his effects; then, at the end of the journey, he seeks a quarrel with them, and sends them back home with blows, as the reward of their labors."—*New Survey*, etc., c. xxix., p. 140.

sierra, and we had barely time to reach the village of Santa Cruz, through a forest of pines blackened by fire, before the rain began to fall in torrents.

Buried in a mass of verdure, like the neighboring city, Santa Cruz displays to the traveller only a solitary church, shaded by two gigantic cypress trees, which bow towards it as if in homage. A population of two thousand souls, occupied in agricultural pursuits, live so quietly in the town and its suburbs, that, excepting on Sunday, one might almost suppose it had been suddenly deserted. The landscape around it is mountainous and romantic. At a league to the north-west, on the banks of a little lake, is the hamlet of *San Cristobal.* I had a letter of introduction to the cura of the place, but learning that he was absent, and the bad weather continuing, I determined to proceed on my way without paying it a visit.

These cool regions of the Cordilleras abound in most beautiful flowers. They literally embalm the air with their odors. The amaryllis, the helianthus, and the *oxalis*, or wood-sorrel, are especially numerous on the borders of the prairies. The *ipomeas* and the clematis festoon the woods, in which they form numberless fragrant bowers. Indian pinks, with orange-colored corollas, gem the hill-sides; while the glycine enlaces the trees, and its clusters of fruit fall around them in festoons. There are also several varieties of *pentstemons* and tree ferns of pale green, the branches of which droop over the surrounding cliffs.

Taltick is approached by a spacious valley, a league in length and a quarter of a league in width. The village is situated at the head of the valley, where the chains of hills which form it come together. We were delighted with the air of comfort and cleanliness which it presents, and especially with the fine orchards of orange trees, carefully inclosed, which lined the roads by which it is approached. The vicinity of the forests adds to the natural dampness of the climate,

and gives it a relative degree of chilliness. In December the cold is occasionally sufficiently great to congeal the fog, which becomes a hoar frost, while the rain comes down in the form of a light snow. The word *frio* (cold) is not considered sufficiently forcible by the people of Coban to convey an idea of the temperature of this place. The plateau of Taltick they call a *tierra helada* (a frozen land), yet as the bananna tree flourishes here, the mercury can never fall very low in the thermometer.

We had been recommended to the house of Doña Ana Guzman, as not only one of the best in the town, but as the only one open to strangers. Of course we had no choice but to go there direct. With the remembrance of Coban still fresh in our minds, we expected to meet with a neat dwelling, smiling faces, and a kindly welcome. Full of these cheerful anticipations, we spurred our animals into the muddy court in front of her dwelling. The noise of our horses' hoofs attracted to the door an individual whose appearance speedily dispelled our illusions. He was a man of repulsive physiognomy; his skin was red and inflamed, his eyes deeply set, his thick and projecting upper lip was covered with red bristles, and his forehead was deeply pitted by the small-pox. Altogether, he presented an appearance of brutal vulgarity, which seemed to belong rather to the old than the new world. He wore a cotton handkerchief tied in a slovenly manner over his head, and slippers without stockings. We saw before us the proprietor of the house, and, at the same time, the village schoolmaster.

After having inquired the object of our visit, whence we came, and whither we were going, Señor Guzman called with an air and voice of indifference to the Señora Ana, his mother, as it appeared. A moment after we saw issuing from a smoky kitchen, in answer to the call, an old woman, with hard, repulsive features, skin like parchment, and piercing eyes—a fitting mother for such a son. She wore an apron which had

probably once been white, but which now bore testimony that her culinary occupations were none of the neatest. Her gray hair, confined with greasy ribbons, was arranged on the top of her head like a crown: her feet were bare; there was a dish-cloth in her hands, and in her mouth a huge cigar!

This agreeable personage, after having carefully surveyed us through a cloud of tobacco smoke, showed us into a gloomy room, which received its only light through a low but wide opening used as a doorway. It contained two old gilt frames, handed down, I doubt not, through several generations, inclosing, as far as I could make out in their state of obliteration, the pictures of ancient saints. A miserable miniature chapel, decorated with faded flowers, sanctified one corner of the apartment, and two large benches, of which I afterwards learned the use, furnished the opposite side of the room, which did triple duty, serving as a dining room, school room, and dormitory.

We had hardly entered before our hostess commenced entertaining us with an account of the dearness of provisions in Taltick, and the famine which prevailed in the neighboring country. We cut her short by asking for dinner. In about ten minutes it was prepared. Morin and myself were each favored with two saucers, one containing an omelette, composed of one egg, which, to increase its size, was mixed with the parings of tomatoes, and the other containing a small quantity of boiled rice. A few dry beans, harder than pebbles, formed our dessert, and constituted, with a calabash of water, and some venerable *tortillas*, the whole of our repast. I did not conceal my discontent, and requested my hostess to procure a chicken, which she finally consented to do, on being paid for it in advance.

When we had finished our meal, I made inquiries concerning our sleeping accommodations. The old woman pointed to the two benches, to which I have already referred, and assured me, in her most persuasive manner, that they were very com-

fortable, and that none of her former guests had ever complained of them. These representations did not reconcile me to them, and I had my hammock swung across the room.

At the first stroke of the Angelus, the various members of the Guzman family assembled for prayer, after which every one made his arrangements for the night, although it was only sundown. Doña Ana having extinguished the light, shared with her two grand-daughters the only bed which was visible in the establishment. The two Indian servants spread a mat on the floor, and disappeared beneath an ample blanket. The younger son, enveloped in his cloak, threw himself down beside Morin on the bench which I had rejected, while the master of the domicile passed into a blind closet, which appeared to be appropriated exclusively to his use. I never learned whether he slept on a bench, or a mat, or a bed.

An hour after our arrival we had determined to leave Taltick at the earliest moment possible. The surrounding country offered but little of interest, and the Guzman family was certainly not attractive; but unfortunately for us we needed mules or porters, and as the Indian carriers require so much time for preparation—one always needs at least twenty-four hours in which to get them started—I made up my mind to be patient, and await their good pleasure, keeping my eyes open meanwhile to what was going on around me.

Three little girls and two boys, with their hair arranged in monastic style, that is to say, with heads closely shaven, leaving only a circle of hair around the temples, constituted the school. The only book taught appeared to be the catechism, and that not with very great success. For, to economize the time of her servants, Doña Ana made large demands upon that of her pupils, keeping them pretty constantly employed with the household duties, so that when the time for recitation came round, the little folks were quite ignorant of their

lessons—an unpardonable dereliction, it would appear, for at such times the blows from the master's ferule were distinctly audible, followed by the tears and entreaties of the culprits. I never knew this quotidian distribution of favor to fail. The children who profited by it were all Creoles, no Indians seeming to be anxious to enjoy the benefits of the establishment. There was also a pack of mangy and half-famished dogs about the house, which always rushed into the dining room, with savage howls, whenever the meals made their appearance. The ferule so dreaded by the scholars then passed into the hands of our hostess, who made use of it upon the animals with unmerciful skill.

We took leave of this amiable family, one cold morning, in the midst of a fog so dense as to prevent our distinguishing any object at a distance of four paces. Morin had wasted much time in endeavoring to procure animals for our journey, but without success. Perhaps there were none in Taltick, or perhaps we did not inspire the inhabitants with sufficient confidence to lead them to trust us with them. We were obliged, therefore, to start on foot, but after ascertaining the difficulties of the route, we found reason to congratulate ourselves on having done so; for the ground proved to be so slippery that horses, or even mules, could scarcely have maintained their equilibrium on the almost perpendicular slopes of the mountain. After having passed through a narrow defile of the mountain, at an elevation of about five thousand two hundred feet, we reached the valley of *Patal*, a vast, swampy plain, surrounded by forests and overlooked by high peaks, constantly enveloped in clouds. Here, at considerable distances apart, like the chalets of an Alpine village, are scattered a few little houses and cultivated patches of ground; but there is no centre of population entitled to the designation of a town, as has been erroneously set down in the maps. The numberless marshes through which I should be obliged

to struggle on foot, and my desire speedily to reach Guatemala, prevented my visiting *Purula*, a town of four hundred inhabitants, situated at a short distance from Taltick, and which is celebrated for the grottoes in its vicinity.

We stopped to rest on the plain of Patal, then continued our course up the mountain, under the shadows of towering oaks, and finally reached the valley of *Santa Rosa*, where we passed the night. The cold here was pinching in the extreme. Magnificent pines, with long, rigid leaves, mingled their foliage with that of different kinds of oak, which retain their verdure during the whole year. From the branches of these trees swayed the grey thread-like masses of the *tillandsia*, a variety of moss which, when stripped of its bark, becomes a veritable vegetable hair.

The valley of *Santa Rosa* has no other issue than a dark, narrow rift in the masses of serpentine which shut it in, and which have strewn the route with their *débris*. On emerging from this gorge, after passing the heights called by the Indians *Quilila*, we enjoyed a remarkable and interesting view. The morning fog had settled down on the valleys, and only the tops of the sierras were visible, lighted up by the rising sun like so many golden islets in an aerial ocean. But soon the vapors, dilated by the rays of the sun, began to rise, and we found ourselves enveloped in a cold, damp mist, which suspended all relation between our eyes and the neighboring objects.

When this had cleared away, we were surprised to find the change which had taken place in the country. The layers of clay and vegetable deposits over which we had travelled previously, had disappeared, and the rocky flanks of the mountains were visible in all their nakedness. This aridity forms a striking contrast with the richness of the opposite declivity of the range. An eruption of green, steatitious rocks, mixed with great silicious masses, sometimes of dazzling white-

, had produced this sudden metamorphosis. It would re-
e all the youth and energy of the New World to vivify the
inertia of these deserts. But, as if by way of compensa-
, we find that in the damp fissures of the ravines, where
lapse of centuries has perhaps deposited a little vegetable
h, the sun has nursed to life some of the most rare and
ıtiful flowers with which we are acquainted. Odoriferous
ıonias, or trumpet-flowers, purple glycines, blue convol-
ıses, and even beautiful scarlet dahlias. We find here
the agave, with its short but wide and fleshy leaves,
tributing its share to hide the ruggedness of the rocks.
spent half of a day in this wild region, gradually as-
ling to an altitude of from five to seven thousand feet
ve the table land of Guatemala, which is itself four
ısand feet above the sea. At about two o'clock we
hed the extremity of the mountain of *Juluchuch*, where
chain abruptly terminates, and from whence an immense
spect opened before us. At our feet was the great escarp-
ıt of the mountain; then came a vast plain, resplendent
ı light, broken up by isolated bluffs, while in the distance
up a high, irregular swell of ground, of dark blue color,
ed over with the white houses of Salama. At the height
n which we contemplated it, this landscape, with its broadly-
ked features, was full of harmony and effect. But when
reached the base of the mountain, and commenced travel-
over the country which at a distance had so dazzled us,
illusion was dispelled, and our admiration gave place to
te a different feeling. A wide plain, arid, sandy, and cov-
l with pebbles and burning gravel, extended before us.
hills were bare and sterile, and the ground entirely un-
ivated. A few miserable mimosas, with shrivelled foliage,
ed their heads languidly under the heat, and some sickly
les of grass profited by their shade to spring up in a feeble
wth. But nature's resources are inexhaustible, and even

this ungrateful soil she does not leave wholly bare, but dots it over with strange, hardy, succulent plants, principally the *melocactus*, the fleshy globe of which is covered with spines, but which bears at its top a spadix surrounded by a kind of down of snowy whiteness.

Late in the afternoon, after crossing a number of ravines worn deep in the gravelly clay of the plain, we reached Salama. The dark verdure of the garden, the white cupola of the church, the ruined escarpments which served to support the first houses, and the Indian girls with their blue skirts, carrying water jars on their shoulders—all made up a scene of quite an unexpected character, and awakened in my mind the classic remembrances of the East. We forded the river which flows near the town, and following a dreary, crooked street, soon found ourselves on the *plaza* or central square. A church, the barracks occupied by Indians, a market, and a beautiful fountain were the most remarkable objects which met our eyes.

We arrived at Salama at an unfortunate moment. The festival of Saint Matthew was near at hand, and the solemnity had drawn a large concourse of strangers to the city, so that every family had its guests or expected to have them, and we vainly knocked at every door for admission. In this dilemma we had recourse to the corregidor, who sent his alcaldes to our assistance, but without effect. The people were deaf to their official representations as they had been to our entreaties. Pitying our distress, the corregidor finally placed his own house and table at our disposal, and here I was afforded an opportunity of renewing my acquaintance with some of the usages of civilized life with which I had of late been all too unfamiliar.

Salama, the political capital of the department of Vera Paz, is dreary in the extreme. It is built in the Spanish style, and has suffered greatly from the siege which it sus-

tained some years ago against the troops of Carrera. With a population of four thousand five hundred souls, a figure considerably under that of the rival town of Coban, it still overbalances it by its vitality, which corresponds with its political importance. The position of Salama, at a short distance from the city of Guatemala, and in the neighborhood of the more restless and turbulent departments of the republic, explains the preference which the government has given to it over the former metropolis of the province. It cannot be denied that the general interests of Vera Paz suffer from the concentration of the administrative power at the extremity of so large a department; but in a State where so little unity and so many elements of discord exist, political questions efface or outweigh all others.

The most interesting object in the vicinity of Salama is an industrial and agricultural establishment situated two leagues from the town, in a south-easterly direction. Founded by the Dominicans, the *Hacienda de San Geronimo*, is now in the hands of an Anglo-Spanish company, which employs not less than five hundred persons in the cultivation of cane and the manufacture of sugar. The sugar produced here is refined on the spot, which is a great advance for the country.

On leaving Salama, we were told that we should be obliged to follow the base of the sierras for a distance of two leagues, then climb a mountain of from three to four thousand feet in elevation, at the base of which, on the other side, we should enter on the table land proper of Guatemala. We had consequently a tolerably hard journey before us, when we halted, a league and a half from the town, to ascertain if our party was complete. We found, on enumerating our followers, that one man was missing, whereupon I dispatched a second in search of him. While waiting for his return, I ascended an eminence near by, which overlooked the country. The soil at this end of the valley was broken up

by projecting rocks of blue, crystalline limestone, which bore evident traces of great antiquity. Indian figs, *euphorbias*, and mullens, with trailing, cannulated stems, were dispersed among the blocks of quartz scattered here and there, and glittering like snow in the sunshine. But these plants afforded no shade, and we suffered greatly from the burning heat, during the two mortal hours which we passed in waiting for our men, with nothing to occupy us except watching the undulating movement of the vapor which rose from the sweltering plain.

At Salama I began to feel considerable uneasiness, when I reflected that we were now in the midst of a people more mixed and audacious than any which we had hitherto encountered, and my apprehension increased when I looked forward, over the chain of mountains before us, where the protection of the law could scarcely be said to extend, and among the fastnesses of which it was easy for the perpetrators of crime to find a safe retreat! And I could not help reflecting, in the same connection, that the missing porter was precisely the man who had charge of my most valuable effects. Vainly did I look towards Salama, but neither the straggler nor the messenger was visible. After waiting until exhausted, I finally decided to send Morin to inform the corregidor of our situation. He threw himself into his saddle and set off, at a brisk trot, on his errand.

Three quarters of an hour after, my Indian messenger returned and announced that search was making for my man in the town. A cloud of dust soon after announced Morin's approach, and from the speed with which he galloped towards us, I inferred that he brought news of importance. He informed me that the delinquent had been found in a *pulperia*, where he had happily forgotten his journey and all the annoyances of life together, and that he had there been arrested by order of the corregidor, who had sent an alcalde to deliver

him into my hands. A little later that officer and his charge arrived, and I was forced to listen to the long explanations of the worthy functionary, and thank him for his good offices. By this time the day was so far advanced that we could not undertake the ascent of the mountains, but limited ourselves to reaching a *hacienda* conveniently situated at their foot. It was a large house, situated on a high terrace, overlooking the plain. We received a cordial welcome here, and passed the remainder of the day in contemplating the blue summits which we so recently descended, and the steep escarpments which lay before us. As night approached, our attention was interested by a more animated spectacle. The plain which, up to this time had been quite deserted, was now covered with little caravans, which succeeded each other at brief distances, now rising over the gentle undulations of the country, and anon disappearing from view in the little valleys which intersected it. All were following the same route with ourselves, and like us, stopped at the hacienda, in search of hospitality, which, it appeared, they were always certain of finding here. When the last party had come in, I counted an aggregate of fifty-seven travellers. They were people from Salama, Coban, and even from San Pedro Carcha, and San Juan. Each group established itself apart, without interfering with the others, and proceeded in the most orderly manner to install itself and make preparations for supper. When we were all encamped, and a dozen fires were lighted around the terrace, the general bivouac presented an extremely curious and lively aspect. Most of the wayfarers were Indians, occupied in transporting maize to Guatemala where the harvest had been scant. The load of each man was four *arrobas*, or one hundred pounds, for transporting which he expected to receive eighteen rials, or two dollars and a quarter. By calculating their profits, after deducting the expenses of a journey of eight days, the reader will be able to form an idea, in

an industrial point of view, of the value of man's time and labor in Guatemala.

After leaving Salama, almost every *Ladino* whom the traveller encounters, carries a knife in his belt, and a long unsheathed rapier by his side or over his shoulder. This warlike equipment is, however, more for show than for use, since assassinations are by no means frequent. I was struck with the Gothic shape of the swords, which resembled those used in the days of Alvarado. I afterwards learned that they were all of Spanish origin. The travellers whom we met on the road, with their slender, agile limbs, their tawny complexions, and scant clothing, carrying their little bundle of effects on the ends of their swords, over their shoulders, reminded me of the heroes of Le Sage, although we were a long way from Salamanca and Cordova.

We passed over a very picturesque ravine, on the morning of leaving the hacienda, and again rose gradually to the region of fogs. The wind now and then elevated the floating masses which came down to earth in the form of rain, at which times we caught sight of the surrounding peaks, some of them at least three thousand feet high, crowned with pines, and walled up by fearful precipices. But these glimpses were very transient, and the view was soon interrupted again by a new condensation of vapor. The water trickled down in numberless little ravines, where the most beautiful of our exotic plants were to be found in native luxuriance. Among them was the *cosmos*, with its delicately-cut foliage, the *inga pulcherrima* with its crimson blossoms, superb *gloxinias* and numerous kinds of *achimènes*, the corollas of which, of a purplish blue, spread out in the shade like colossal violets.

When we had reached the other side of this summit, we found ourselves in a warm valley, irrigated by a stream called *Caña Brava*, the banks of which are lined with bamboos. Crossing this, the route extends over poor and sandy soil, cov-

ered with wild guava trees. At a distance of four leagues, from the foot of the mountain our nostrils were suddenly saluted by a strong smell of sulphuretted hydrogen; and we soon after came to some white open spaces of ground, devoid of vegetation, veritable *solfatares*, whence escaped a cloud of mephitic vapors. Numerous springs of hot water, issuing from the ground around them, discharged into the bed of a little stream of repulsive appearance called *Rio de las Tejas*. I cast but a hasty glance on these new phenomena, as the rain had set in, but hurried onward toward a hut which we perceived in the distance. At the sound of our horses' hoofs a little brown head, animated by sparkling black eyes, protruded itself through the bamboo enclosure of the hut, and a child-like voice exclaimed, "*Señores, no hay gente aqui!*"—"Gentlemen, there is no one at home!" We nevertheless entered the enclosure in spite of this announcement, where we found a little girl of perhaps four years of age, who placing herself unflinchingly before us, exclaimed, in a tone of decision, "*Señores*, this house is not an inn!" We could not avoid smiling, and entered into a parley with the infant dragon of the place. The child listened to our expostulations with the utmost gravity, and allowed herself to be moved by them; then turning toward our Indians, she said with a comic air of superiority: "And you idlers, why do you not fasten your animals to that tree yonder, where you see the straw and the maize?' I was perfectly delighted with this pert little creature, so young, so resolute, and so intelligent. I inquired her age, what she did, and all about her family. She replied to all my questions in a pretty, prompt way. "Are you not afraid," I inquired, "alone here in the house?" "Oh no, I am never afraid, for God watches over children." This reply enchanted me, and I caught her in my arms in a tempest of delight. Friendly relations having been established, the little lady passed into an adjoining room and left us alone. As she did

[illegible] and the storm raging in the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of her [illegible] wishing to leave without making her some little present. I then earned the cause of her prolonged absence. Found in this room to please which is met with women and characterises her during every stage of her existence she had left it for the purpose of arranging herself in her best gown but this first impulse was checked by a feeling of weariness and in her entanglement she lingered to response where is. Charming instance. Inquiry found in all countries of the world, even in the most minute life of the low [illegible]

We had not proceeded far before we heard the roaring of the *Matagua* or *Rio Grande*, a foaming torrent which rises in the mountains of Solola, thirty leagues to the northward of the capital of the republic, and which separates the department of Vera Paz from that of Guatemala. After falling rapidly for six thousand feet, and describing a semicircle of more than an hundred leagues in a south-easterly direction, the torrent becomes a quiet stream, which discharges its waters in the Gulf of Honduras.

We crossed it on a wooden bridge of a single arch sustained by cables, and solidly fastened to the ledges of rock which rise on either bank. The bridge had in the preceding year received one of the most overwhelming floods ever experienced in this country, which twice completely submerged it. The inhabitants of Guatemala speak of this work with the most respectful admiration, and are disposed to enumerate it as the eighth wonder of the world. They seem to have forgotten, in the fervor of their patriotism, that it was built on the banks of the Thames. Intended, in the first instance, for an English company which ruined itself in some absurd scheme of colonization, it was sold for debt, and bought by the government of Guatemala. Never was money better invested, for previously to its erection the only mode of crossing the river was in a

frail canoe—a process which, during the rainy season, was both difficult and dangerous. A plain, substantial house has been built at one end of the bridge for the abode of the watchman, and to afford shelter to travellers. We slept there, with the roar of the stream sounding in our ears, the imposing voice of which seemed redoubled in volume during the night.

Next morning we commenced to climb the flanks of the Cordilleras anew, and traversed a temperate region, very rough and broken, where but few inhabitants are to be seen, and little or no cultivation to be met with. A little before sundown a fresh wind commenced to blow from the south-east, bringing up from the depths of the valleys great masses of vapors, in which we soon found ourselves enveloped. We had reached the highest crest of the chain, where all the trees were covered with pendent mosses, with white and threadlike stems. Seen through the evening mist, these monastic robes had a strange and melancholy appearance; but we were allowed but little time to contemplate them, for the sky suddenly became black, and the clouds all at once dissolved themselves in rain, which fell so rapidly that we had scarcely time to open our *suyacals* before we were drenched to the skin.

Fortunately we were not far from the place where we proposed to spend the night, and our guides had pointed it out to us during the afternoon. But it was necessary, in order to reach it, to leave the main road and pursue a bye path, which we found it almost impossible to follow, owing to the obscurity and the violent rain which poured down on us in an unabating flood. Night, furthermore, was coming on, and our exhausted horses stumbled at every step, and every trace of a path seemed to have disappeared. Convinced that we had missed our way, we decided upon turning back. Soon after the wind and rain both subsided, the skies became brighter, and we were finally enabled to find the shelter of which we were in need. It was high time, for it was now quite dark. Let the reader imagine to

himself a rude piece of masonry, full of crevices, crumbling, smoky, destitute of every comfort, and then crowd it with twenty drenched and famished travellers, shivering with cold, and he will have a picture of our retreat for the night. A similar confusion to that attending a shipwreck reigned in the interior. Every one struggled, by the faint light of the fire, and without regard to his neighbor, to change his saturated garments, and obtain some food. The arrival of more guests, followed by the luggage, also dripping with water, was not an agreeable incident, but we had to conform ourselves to the circumstances. The night seemed of endless length; the water filtered through the roof in our faces, and loosened pieces of the plastering, which rattled to the floor around us.

The reader may be sure that we were awake early, and we left this miserable spot before sunrise, and without regret. Towards noon we caught sight, from the heights, of the city of Guatemala in the distance. The mountains to the west had disappeared, and we only distinguished a few luminous spots on the flat uniformity of the plateau. One of these, to which our guides called our attention, they said was the church of San Francisco, the loftiest in the city, which was all the more distinct by contrast with the purple bulk of the *Volcan de Agua* rising behind it to the very clouds.

Soon after we came to a narrow valley, surrounded by sterile bluffs. The *Rio de los Platanos*, swollen by the rains of the preceding night, rushed through it with frightful impetuosity, and brought us to a full stop. On both of its banks were travellers like ourselves, discussing the possibility of crossing it, while others went about in search of a ford, or quietly watched the foaming waters without being able to come to any conclusion. We were ourselves of this latter category. After some delay, one of the most resolute of our guides, a robust fellow and excellent swimmer, removing his clothes, and retaining only his staff as a support against the current,

undertook to ford the stream. All eyes were anxiously turned towards him. The water was not very deep, but fearfully rapid, and when he reached the middle of the torrent, he staggered, and seemed unable to oppose its power. Every moment we expected to see him swept away, but he recovered himself after considerable effort, and finally reached the opposite bank in safety. The ice was now broken, and nearly all were ready to attempt a passage. On such occasions the Indians display great prudence; they never venture alone, but go in a body of three or four, in order to oppose their united strength against the force of the current. For half an hour the banks of the stream presented quite an animated and amusing scene, and at the end of that time, all except the most timid travellers had effected the transit. Resuming our journey on the opposite bank, we directly found the route obstructed by hillocks of shifting sand, which at first sight it seemed impossible to pass over, but which we nevertheless succeeded in evading by following the hollows between them. Hardly had we overcome these obstacles when we heard the roar of a second torrent, deeper and more impetuous than the *Rio de los Platanos*. Here our guides seemed wholly uncertain as to what was to be done. They measured with their eyes the depths of the waters, and after a short deliberation, came to the conclusion that the stream could not be forded here. We therefore determined to ascend it, keeping as close to the banks as possible, and carefully holding on to the bushes. Twice our horses stumbled, and came near being precipitated into the water, after which we had great difficulty in restoring their confidence and making them proceed. At last we reached a point which seemed more favorable, and although the ford here was scarcely less dangerous, yet we resolved on attempting it. All got over safely except the last Indian, who lost his balance, and disappeared beneath the surface. For a moment, I trembled for his life, but his comrades went

speedily to his rescue, and dragged him safely to the shore. Morin and myself then followed, trusting to the sureness of foot of our animals. I was quite nervous when, at a critical moment, my horse flagged, faltered, and came near losing his footing. A sudden prick of the spur, however, brought him to his feet again, and he carried me to the opposite shore without accident.

A third stream, the *Rio de las Vacas*, presented the same difficulties, which we overcame with the same good fortune. The bed of this torrent is wide, but not very deep. It is divided into several channels, and occupies the hollow of a valley overlooked by picturesque sandy hills, very varied in aspect, and covered with pines.* A little beyond we came to the village of *Chinauta*, through which we passed without stopping. Our guides were desirous to remain there over night, but as we were two leagues from the city, I turned a deaf ear to their hints and suggestions. I must admit that the execrable roads, destitute of bridges, and affording neither shelter nor accommodations, at the very gates of the capital, gave me but a poor opinion of the administration of the country, and cast some shades over the smiling perspective of my imagination. Evidently we had not yet reached the end of our trials.

At Chinauta commences a prodigious ascent to the plateau of Guatemala. The road leads up through a ravine cut deep in the flank of a gigantic declivity by the rains, and is obstructed throughout by the crumbling masses of indurated sand which have fallen from its sides. Nowhere else can the steep escarpment or edge of the plateau be ascended. We struggled up wearily, and when we reached the top, we halted to take breath and look back on the vast cones which rise from the lower valleys. So steep are they, that a grain of

* *P. tenuifolia*, Benth.

sand detached from their tops does not stop until it reaches he bottom. The country before us appeared to be level, but narked shadows here and there indicated that it was cut hrough by deep valleys similar to that through which we had just passed.

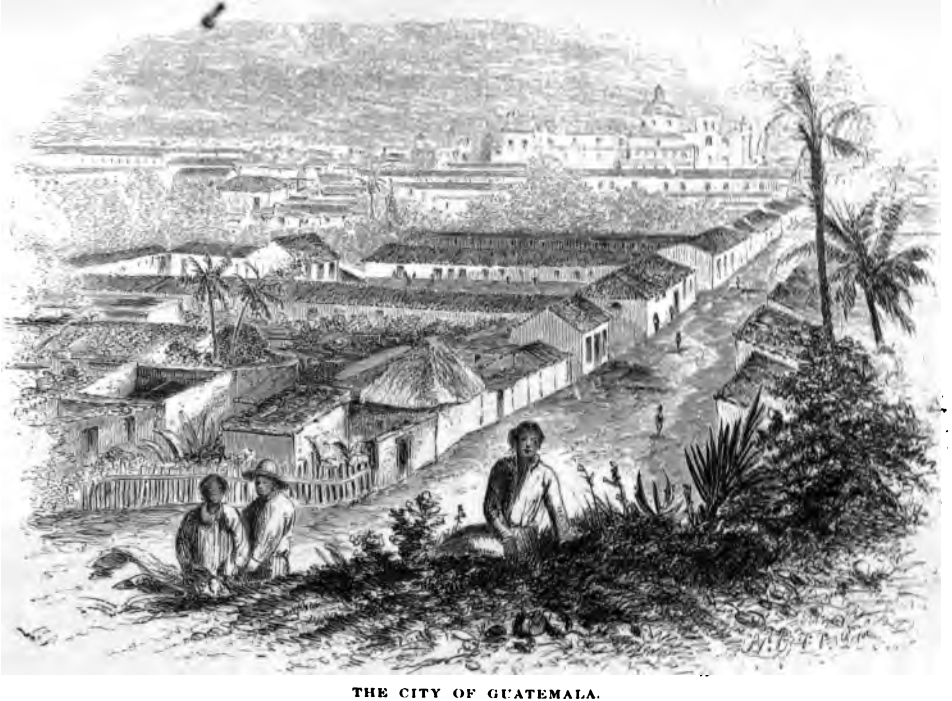
We continued on our journey. All was fresh and green n the table land. The horizon was vast, the volcanoes stood ut in bold relief, and nothing was wanting to the landscape xcept a ray of sunlight. Unfortunately, the sky was overast, the sun hidden from view, and white clouds floated at the ase of the *sierras*, as if to give warning of coming rain. We ere now so near the town as to be able to distinguish its rincipal edifices, but we looked in vain for farms, gardens, ountry seats, or other traces of the life and movement belongng to a populous centre.

Meanwhile the atmosphere became every moment heavier, nd the rain was evidently near at hand. Worn out with faigue, our guides advanced but slowly, stopping at intervals f every few minutes to rest. Convinced that they could not each the city until very late, I put spurs to my animal and eft them to pursue their way under the charge of Morin. 'en minutes after, a sudden wind sprung up from the southest and swept over the table land, bringing with it the rain, hich fell in cataracts. It seemed as if the windows of heaven ad indeed been opened! I was forced to slacken my pace, nd my poor horse, as if discouraged and overcome by the rifting rain, faltered, fell, rose, and fell again, leading me to elieve that his last hour had come. After a time the ground ecame less slippery and more firm. We passed between two ows of hedges; a few houses became visible at considerable istances apart; finally they became closer, and directly the orse's hoofs sounded on the pavement of the capital!

A wide, straight street extended before me, as far as the ye could reach. The buildings which lined it were not, how-

ever, very imposing, and the grass was growing up in all directions between the stones of the pavement. The picture was not bright, and the dull sky lent to it an additional degree of gloom. The rain, moreover, still continued to fall in torrents. How was I to find my way in a strange city, the streets of which were not named, to the house whither I had been directed? I made inquiries at several doors, but could obtain neither information nor shelter. At sound of my horse's hoofs, which awakened an echo in the silent streets, some few of the inhabitants were attracted to their windows, but I must add, with regret, that their demonstrations were anything but friendly. At last, however, after much trouble and many rebuffs, I succeeded in reaching my place of destination. The house at which I stopped was well known in the city, having belonged to the historian Juarros, whose name it still bears. It was then a hotel, or rather a *casa de pupilos*, a respectable kind of boarding-house for students. I resolutely entered the court-yard, although not without some misgivings as to my reception. I had scarcely three rials in my purse, and there was no hope, in this bad weather, of the arrival of my baggage before the following day. My pale face, trembling voice, and dripping clothing, however, moved the compassion of the landlady. She did not inquire into the condition of my exchequer, but conducted me into a tolerably clean chamber, in which she speedily swung a hammock. A few minutes afterwards a person entered, a second good Samaritan, bringing with him a pair of pantaloons. a shirt, and slippers, which he solicited me to accept. He had seen me dismount, and comprehended my distressed condition. I was next served with a supper only fit for a nun, of eggs, chocolate, sweetmeats, and white bread. I should have preferred something more substantial, but had not the heart to complain, when I thought of my poor travelling companions wandering about, wet and famished, on the dreary table land.

When bed-time came, I found my costume rather cool for the night, and asked for a blanket. My hostess had none to give me, but offered me instead a kind of mantilla used by the women of the country. I gratefully accepted it, and forced it to do all the service of which it was capable. While philosophically pacing my room, wrapped up in this grotesque garment, seeking to warm myself by exercise, a brilliant idea struck me, as my eye rested upon a large piece of green cloth covering the table. Thanking Providence for its manifest intervention in my behalf, I removed the remains of my supper, seized the precious covering, wrapped myself in it, rolled into my hammock, and fell asleep.



THE CITY OF GUATEMALA.

XII.

GUATEMALA.

Rain—Out again—Disappointed emigrants—View of plateau and city—Giant volcanoes—Dangerous fort—Dreariness of the environs—Streets of the city—The grand *plaza*—Public buildings—Great fountain—The cathedral—Its treasures—Sculptures—Indigenous school of art—Paintings—Church of Santo Domingo—La Merced—San Francisco—Hospital—The cemetery—Strange burial ceremonies—Reminiscences of Spain—University of San Carlos—Ancient books—The Fray Ximenes—Mythical Academy of Natural History—The Economical Society—Gloomy aspect of the city—Its flora—The curse of bells—Habits of the people—*Serenos*—Indian women—Carrera—The public market—The massacre of 1840—The plateau of Guatemala—Absence of water—Aqueducts—Irrigation—Building materials—Plan of dwellings—Rude furniture—Gardens—Horticulture—Uniformity in mode of life—Absence of social enjoyments—Traits of the better classes—The women—Religious ceremonies—Food and meals—Cereals—The *agave americana*—*Pulque*—Costume—Theatre—Lack of hotels—*Mesones*—Education—General demoralization—The mechanical arts—Interior commerce—Foreign trade—Political condition—Rafael Carrera—His origin—Rise to power—Character—Parallel with Rosas—Not quite a presentation—The army—Visit to the Pacific—Morin—Conclusion.

THE morning after my arrival, Morin appeared with his Indians. He had passed the night in a kind of caravansery, resorted to by native carriers and *gente comun*, or common people, and seemed to be very little delighted with what he had seen and experienced in Guatemala. In fact, the bad weather was not likely to produce pleasant impressions on the most cheerful spirit, especially after the fatigues and exposures of a long and weary journey. For three days we were confined to our house, chilly, cheerless, and miserable, listening to the eternal drip, drip, drip, of the rain, and without a single friend to enliven us with his conversation, or excite us with an account of the novelties before us. On the fourth day, however, the sun broke triumphantly through the heavy squad-

ros of leaden clouds that had obstructed its rays, clearing the atmosphere and restoring us to liberty.

The capital of Guatemala (*Quauhtemallan* according to the Indian orthography) is too little known to permit me to pass it by without a description. I should feel obliged to notice it, if only in view of the condition of the unfortunate Europeans who reside there, seduced to the spot by exaggerated accounts of its wealth and facilities for enterprise, and who, after having exhausted their resources in an expensive voyage, find, too late, all their illusions dispelled, and themselves reduced to a condition of abject dependance on the caprices of a suspicious and unsympathizing race.

The spectator, placed on the *cerro de Carmen*, a hill rising to the north-east of Guatemala, and which supports a little church, the most ancient monument of Christian architecture in the country, is able to take in a vast horizon, in which the city occupies the first place. The plateau in the centre of which it stands, is vast, bare, and monotonous; but beyond the city, in needful relief, rise three gigantic volcanoes, of which that called *Volcan de Agua* or Water Volcano, eight leagues distant, is most remarkable for its symmetrical outlines, and its imposing grandeur. The *Volcan de Fuego*, or Fire Volcano, to the left of that just named, and half hidden by an intervening chain of mountains, has an effect less grand; but its ashy crown, which no human foot has ever reached, and from which rises a column of smoke, frequently illuminated by flashes of flame, accompanied by subterranean thunders, is most likely to arrest the eye of the traveller, and overawe his imagination. To the south-west, and of inferior height, but a giant still, rises the Volcano of Pacaya,* at the

* This volcano derives its name from a kind of palm (*chamædora elatior*, Mart.), which abounds around its base, and of which the succulent flower af-

foot of which steams the sulphurous lake of Amatitan. During the rainy season, or, as it is called here, the winter, these three colossi, starting from a base itself elevated four thousand feet above the sea, are enveloped in clouds, and their summits are then only rarely visible. But when the dry season comes round, and the atmosphere becomes pure, their outlines appear with wonderful clearness, and they leave an impression rather on the spirit than the vision, at once vague, grand, and almost oppressive—standing there in their proud isolation, as if in disdain of the earth, high up, in communion with the clouds.

As I have said, Guatemala is built in an open plain, and is without defences except a little fort, in course of construction at the time of my visit, called *el Castillo*, and which seemed to be a source of more inquietude to the citizens than it could ever be to an invading force. As the houses are low, one sees from a distance only a monotonous succession of roofs, relieved here and there by the domes and clock-towers of the churches. An air of solitude and abandonment pervades its environs; there are no gardens, no plantations, no country houses, nor any of those industrial establishments, which throng the approaches to our capitals. The houses of the suburbs are mere huts, covered with thatch, and separated from each other by hedges or open spaces of ground. Proceeding further, the traveller finds broad streets, all alike, laid out with the severest regularity, which prevails equally in the architecture of the houses. As a precaution against earthquakes, their height is limited to twenty feet, and they are therefore reduced to a single ground floor. Their fronts are

fords an article of food, when yet young and tender, and still enveloped in its spathe. This mountain has an altitude of seven thousand one hundred feet above the sea. The altitude of the Volcan de Agua is fourteen thousand five hundred (or something greater than that of Mont Blanc), and that of the Volcan de Fuego is thirteen thousand nine hundred and thirty feet.

without ornament, but sometimes are bordered by a narrow sidewalk, which give a momentary relief to the pedestrian, from the detestable pavement of the streets, composed of stones, rough, angular, and badly laid down.

The centre of the town is occupied by the ground plaza, a vast rectangle, six hundred and twenty-five feet long by five hundred and thirty-five feet wide, on which are collected most of the public buildings of the city, the Palace of the Government, which was the residence of the Captain General under the Crown, the *Cabildo* or City Hall, the Palace of the Court of Justice, in which are deposited the archives of the old confederation, the Mint and the Prison. These are all low and uniform, masked by a covered colonnade in front, and without the least architectural display, although pompously denominated palaces. One side of the square is occupied by private individuals, and is lined with shops. The cathedral stands at its western end, and in its centre is an octagonal fountain, heavy in style, and altogether in bad taste, once surmounted by an equestrian statue of Charles IV., which was thrown down and broken in the first ebullitions of the Independence. The horse only remains, as if to illustrate the nothingness of the human grandeur which it survives. Considered in an artistic point of view, it is to be regretted that the horse did not share the fate of his royal rider.

Successive rows of mean huts fill up a great part of the area of the square, in which are sold pottery, articles of iron, the thread of the agave, and other articles of merchandise of little value. Their rent is an item in the municipal revenues.

The cathedral, divided into three arched naves, is simple and elegant, and was built in 1780, by an Italian architect. The great altar is of wood, gilt, and conforms to the character of the edifice. Among its ornaments is a large and tasteful lamp of silver, but one now looks in vain for the other

sacred vessels, and the six golden candlesticks, with which it was endowed by the munificence of the Archbishop Francisco Monroy, and which were not less precious for their execution than their intrinsic value. They were upwards of three feet in height, and each weighed two hundred and fifty-six ounces. Four of these were taken, by some sacrilegious hand, on the night of the 24th of June, 1815; the two remaining ones were taken somewhat later, but this time the spoilation was disguised under the name of "public necessity."

The cathedral contains numerous sculptures in wood, painted and gilded with all the original luxury of the ancient missals. Some of these are not without merit. Among them is a remarkable figure of an expiring Sebastian. The sad but resigned expression and position of the head, the play of the muscles, and the entire anatomy of the torso, reveal a deep knowledge of art. This statue originated in Guatemala a school of sculptors unknown to Europe. Strangers to the models of the old world, and left free to their own inspirations, they combined with their ardent piety a deep artistic sentiment, which was well expressed in their works. And here, it may be remarked in passing, that the Spanish imagination neglects nothing in art which may contribute to exalt the devotional feeling, and if this cannot be done by the lights and shades of sculpture, it calls color to its aid to heighten effects and deepen impressions. Such was the origin of these works of undeniable taste, to which such men as Roldan, Montanes, and Alonzo Cano, devoted their talents, and who, under the circumstances, carried their art to astonishing perfection. They flourished under the protection of the Church, and were supported by the government; but with the revolution came liberal ideas, the religious orders were suppressed, and the sources of their support were dried up. As a consequence, sculpture, of a dignity to come under the designation of art, is now extinct. Painting, too, has fallen into equal decline, and even the in-

ferior arts, such as that of the goldsmith, and the manufacture of inlaid work, etc., are now in a state of decadence so complete that it may well be doubted if they had ever reached any high degree of development.

Among the paintings in the church, almost all of which are mediocre and bad, is one by Rosales, the most eminent professor of his art which Guatemala has produced. In it he has undertaken to reproduce the grief of the angels at the moment that our Saviour expired; an ambitious conception which might well have embarrassed the prince of painters himself. It is perhaps sufficient to say that Rosales was no Raphael, notwithstanding the whimsical pretensions of his countrymen. His picture is feeble in combination, atrocious in perspective, and contains only a few pretty heads, and a tolerable study of Christ.

Because I have devoted so much space to the cathedral and its decorations, the reader need not fear that I am going to carry him through the remaining twenty-four churches, which serve for the religious exercises of the people of Guatemala. I shall only allude briefly to the three principal ones, namely, Santo Domingo, La Merced, and San Francisco. Santo Domingo was the first church erected after the abandonment of the old city and the selection of the present site of the capital, in 1776.* The façade is overloaded with ornaments, of the style of the rennaissance, which with the yellowish color of the edifice, convey the impression, however in-

* I may mention here that the first city of Guatemala, founded by Alvarado, was destroyed in 1541, by a flood of water which broke through the crater of the Volcan de Agua, at the base of which it was built. The site and ruins now bear the name of *Ciudad Vieja*. The second city, and that which attained the greatest prosperity, and was really magnificent, was in great part destroyed by an earthquake in 1773. It has still a considerable population and is called *La Antigua*. The third and existing city, *La Nueva*, was founded in 1776, three years after the catastrophe which destroyed the old capital.

congruous it may appear, of those wonderful structures which constitute the glory of our pastry cooks and candy manufacturers. The interior, however, is splendidly decorated. On entering it the low vaults, the heavy pillars, and the massive character of the architecture, show at once that the predominant idea of its builders was strength and security against the visitations under which the old city had fallen. Among the paintings which it contains, are two large ones by Pontaza, the last painter which the country has produced of any reputation. It represents the irruption of the Mohammedans into the church of Sandomir at the moment of the celebration of the holiest rites of the Church. The other is the martyrdom of San Sadocet and his companions. The composition of both is *bizarre* in the extreme, but not destitute of invention. The sculptures are of a higher character, and the figures are distinguished for their expression, variety, and the *naïveté* of their attitudes, and the luxury and caprice of their accessories. Faithful to the spirit of their race, the various artists have sought to reproduce scenes of barbarity in all of their details. The Christs, in particular, are represented of life-size, agonized, contorted, and bloody, to a revolting degree.

The Merced, in the Spanish style, is a pretty church, with a fine site. In an artistic point of view, its massive towers are open to criticism, notwithstanding that they give to the edifice a great part of its originality. The interior is well arranged, so that the light from the dome is concentrated on the grand altar, while the audience is left in deep shade. In the last chapel on the right is a Christ bearing the cross, an impressive piece of sculpture by Alonzo de la Paz. The head is a *chef d'œuvre* worthy of the Spanish masters. Not far distant is a virgin of *Chiquiniquira*, with a face of ebony, and loaded down with sumptuous toys. She receives exclusively the homage of the faithful of the African race.

The church of San Francisco, or the Pantheon, is the loftiest of all, but it is only an incoherent, indecisive mass, very far from justifying the expressions of admiration which have been bestowed on it. It was commenced in 1796, and is said to have cost a million of dollars—an enormous sum in a country wanting in the very necessaries of life. From its top may be obtained a finer view of the city and surrounding country than can be had from any other point.

The monuments which I have enumerated, whatever may be said of them in other respects, possess the merit of having been built by a comparatively poor colony, less happily endowed than Mexico and Peru with the precious metals. In 1829, after a most sanguinary struggle, their ornamental treasures became the spoils of the victorious party. The Liberals, not content with abolishing the monastic orders, exiled the clergy, confiscated their property, and went so far as to pillage the churches for the means of defraying the cost of the civil war in which they were engaged. It is said that the cathedral and the churches of Santo Domingo and the Merced furnished a contingent of $150,000.

The hospital of Guatemala is an establishment which reflects great honor on its citizens. It occupies a large area of ground on the eastern limits of the city, and has an annual revenue, thanks to numerous pious bequests, of from eighteen to twenty thousand dollars. A portion of this, however, is raised by imposts levied expressly for its benefit. It has two hundred beds, and is free to all who need its care. It would be an improvement if it were better ventilated and had more light, and above all if it had better beds, for it must be admitted that a simple plank is rather a hard couch for the sick or wounded. During the year 1853, not less than four thousand and sixty-four persons received the benefits of the hospital, of which three thousand six hundred and thirteen were

discharged cured, and four hundred and twenty-one died. Its expenses for the year were $19,300.

The practice of burying in the churches was abolished in 1831 by a decree of the Legislature, which opened the cemetery of the hospital to the city, and prohibited inhumations elsewhere. This cemetery is nearly surrounded by high walls, which, as in Spain, serve in their turn for purposes of burial. They are built with compartments, opening on the inside, in which the coffins are placed and the mouths plastered up. Occupying corresponding places on the outside are lozenges painted in black for receiving inscriptions, so that the wall resembles the display of multitudinous packs of cards. At the end of every ten years, the fosses for the common dead are cleaned out for the reception of new occupants, and the bones are piled together in pyramidal heaps, one in each corner of the enclosure.

One day, while in the vicinity of the cemetery, I heard, at a little distance, the sound of music, gay and animated as that of a festival. It proceeded from a group of young people, bearing in their midst a litter, apparently covered with flowers. Every face wore a cheerful expression, and all entered the enclosure with light steps, as if going to a wedding. Surprised by the spectacle of such a group in a place apparently so little in harmony with its spirit, I instinctively followed it, until it stopped at the edge of one of the deep fosses which always stand yawning for the dead. I approached one of the party, and inquired the occasion of such a merry gathering. "We are burying a baby!" was his simple response, and he looked at me with an expression of surprise, as much as to say, "What a singular question?" The explanation recalled to my memory an incident in my Spanish experience, which I hope the reader will pardon me for recounting here.

While stopping at a little port of Algarve called *Villa*

Real, where I had gone to embark for Guadiana, I was roused in the middle of the night, by a noisy concert, intermingled with joyous shouts, which proceeded from a neighboring dwelling. The sounds continued until daybreak, that is to say, they were kept up until the hour of our departure. When we had got outside the bar of the river, a slight breeze sprang up, a sail was hoisted, the oars were abandoned, and our sailors finding themselves at leisure, commenced preparing for their frugal repast of bread and olives. The captain invited me to join them, and we entered into a conversation in which I alluded to the concert of the preceding night.

"It was in celebration," he explained, "of the death of a child in the neighboring house."

"How!" I exclaimed in astonishment, "is this your mode of manifesting grief in Villa Real?"

"*Señor*," he replied gravely, "I am ignorant what may be the custom elsewhere, for I have never been abroad, but here, when we lose a child who has not yet attained its seventh year, we sincerely rejoice in the event as a manifestation of God's mercy; for it thus escapes the miseries of this world, and returns to the bosom of its Creator, unsullied by a single sin."

While the old sailor expressed himself in these earnest words, I gazed on his bronzed, weather-beaten face, dropping with perspiration, and his rough hands hardened by toil, and reflected on his miserable fare, his lowly lot, and the dangers of the deep to which he was daily exposed, and I comprehended the full force of his words. Such then is the rationale of a custom, growing out of a deep and religious appreciation of our mundane miseries. But in the Spanish American colonies, where its true sense is lost, or is not understood, it only serves as an occasion or pretext for untimely merriment and diversion.

Among the public edifices of Guatemala, may be mentioned

the buildings of the University of San Carlos, which, although unfinished, form a harmonious group, somewhat severe in style, yet strictly in good taste. The institution dates back to the year 1678. It contains a library of three thousand volumes, composed, for the most part, of ancient theological works of but slight interest. This collection was at one time doubled by the spoliation of the convents, but the present government has restored the musty spoils to their legitimate owners. But here, however, its munificence ceased, for, among all the treasures confiscated belonging to the religious orders, these are the only ones which have found their way back. There exists in the library of the university, a history of the country, in manuscript, by the Fray Ximenes, which I have never seen quoted—perhaps because it has never been so fortunate as to find a reader. It is in four large volumes, and I must confess that I neglected to avail myself of the excellent opportunity for instruction which was offered in its pages.* As to the Anatomical Museum, of which I had heard such marvels, it consists of a single subject, modeled in wax under the direction of Dr. Flores, and is preserved in the amphitheatre of the hospital. A similar disappointment attended

* M. Morelet does not here keep up that catholic scientific spirit which gives to his book, as a whole, much of its value; and his "confession," in this case, is not altogether to his credit. The works of the Fray Ximenes are in three volumes. One contains a part of the "*Historia de San Vicente de Chiapa y Guatemala*," commencing with Book iv., and concluding with Book v., Chapter lxxxvi., comprising the history of the country between the years 1601 and 1698. It has 1031 folio pages. The second volume has 572 pages in quarto, and comprises a vocabulary of the Kachiquel, Zutugil, and Quiché dialects, "the metropolitan languages," as they were called, of Guatemala. A third volume contains a number of distinct works bound together, among which the most important are, a grammar of the Kachiquel, Zutugil, and Quiché languages; A *Confesionario* and a catechism in the same languages; and a "History of the Origin of the Indians of the Province of Guatemala, translated from the Quiché language, for the greater convenience of Ministers of the Holy Gospel," etc. The latter was printed in Vienna, in the year 1857, from a copy made by Dr. Carl Scherzer.—T.

my search for the Museum of Natural History, and the Academy of the Fine Arts—institutions which have never existed, except in the imagination of the inhabitants, and in certain geographical treatises.

I am aware that in 1795 a patriotic association was formed for the encouragement of agriculture, the amelioration, in an educational point of view, of the condition of the lower orders, and for the stimulation of national industry. This society had a passion for everything that was new. It overflowed with communications, projects, and reports. A reform was requisite in the culture of cacao. The mulberry tree promised most astonishing results. Flax was brought up and subjected to most interesting experiments. One day a paper was submitted on the simplification of the manufacture of indigo, and on the next a novel suggestion for the spinning of cotton. An appropriation was voted for the relief of ailing laborers; in a word, every member was anxious for the public prosperity, and desirous to hasten on the day when Guatemala should rival the proudest capitals of the Old World in science and the arts.

But the ardor which burned in the breasts of the founders of the "Economical Society" cooled with time. Governmental disturbances, the scantiness of their pecuniary resources, the disappointments inseparable from first attempts, chilled the zeal of the members. Political convulsions and changes turned men's thoughts and energies into other channels, and gradually member after member threw up responsibilities and obligations which were becoming onerous; in a word, the institution, long tottering, is now in its last gasp. Thanks to a stipend obtained annually, through means of a lottery encouraged by the government, it still maintains a gratuitous school for drawing, sculpture, and the elements of mathematics. And it still continues to publish a bulletin, which, to be sure, nobody reads, and persists, in the midst of

general indifference, to distribute prizes for industry and skill; but so slight is the competition that frequently the principal prize is borne off by an embroidered handkerchief, or some other frivolous object, the work of some young lady of good family.

Guatemala is gloomy in appearance. The uniformity of its houses, the absence of vehicles, the silence and desertion of its streets, all communicate a feeling of mortal *ennui* to the stranger who has satisfied his curiosity. None but a botanist can find occupation in the city. Towards the end of September, the period of my visit, I observed along the walls of the houses a very beautiful variety of the aster, a kind of nicotina with pale and tubulous corollas, the beautiful red flowers of the *mirabilis jalapa*, and a magnificent vine, the *ipomœa villosa*, gracefully festooned against the walls, which were further set off with Indian pinks and the various kinds of *solanaceæ*. On the borders of the streams I also found the aquatic helianthus, the red *œnethere*, etc. These plants grow freely between the stones of the pavement, which are almost hidden beneath their luxuriance. The flora of the place, however, becomes richer as we advance from its centre towards its suburbs. There we find the arborescent dahlia, the *datura* (night-shade), the *ipomœa longistipulata*, the *euphorbia pulcherrima*, and a lovely blue convolvulus, which I believe has never been described.

But if in Guatemala the stranger escapes the noise and bustle of a mart of industry and trade, his ears, on the other hand, are tormented by the melancholy jangle of its bells, which is prolonged from church to church, and convent to convent, for the entire day. The people go to bed early and get up late. At eight o'clock in the morning the streets are still deserted, and the petty traffic of the place can hardly be said to commence before ten o'clock. As soon as the shadows begin to shorten, the wares exposed for sale are with-

drawn within the shops, the doors are hermetically closed, and by eight o'clock in the evening only the watchmen are found in the streets. The organization of a corps of *serenos*, or night police, and the lighting of the city, are two improvements of recent date. Before the year 1841 the streets were hardly safer than they were in Havana before the administration of Tacon; but now one may go about freely, without arms, and without fear, within the circle guarded by the police. It was not without difficulty that the municipal authorities succeeded in establishing these reforms, and in obtaining from the citizens the moderate contributions requisite to ensure their support.

The most interesting spectacle which the city afforded to me was that of the public square, where the Indians collect from every direction around the capital, to dispose of their wares and provisions. From the north come charcoal, fat pine wood, and the variety of wild plum called by the Indians *jocote*, and which gives its name to the village of Jocotenango. The women of Chinauta come here, laden down with earthen ware, under which they daily struggle up the steep declivity which I have already described as separating their village from the plateau. From the east the city derives its supply of milk and the fruits and vegetables of the temperate zone; from the south the products of the tropics, sugar, cotton, and the fish of the lake of Amatitan. From this direction come also the Indians of *Los Altos*, the best conditioned of all Central America. Their faces are more oval and intelligent, their beards heavier, and their manners more confident and manly, than those of the Indians of Vera Paz. They are indubitably the most useful and industrious citizens of the State. They supply the city with cheese, woollen stuffs, cacao which they obtain in barter from Soconusco, and hats and *petates* which they manufacture from

the leaves of the palm in the course of their long journeys.*

Here, also, may be seen the Indian woman advancing with an agile step, her basket supported on her head, her last-born astride of her hip and held in place with one hand, while with the other she leads the next oldest, a little naked child who trots along by her side with an imperturbable face, and never a word of complaint or expression of fatigue. Some of these women bring their *tortillas*, still fresh and almost smoking, all the way from Mixco to the city, a distance of nine miles, in an hour and a half.

By eleven o'clock, the last village of the neighborhood has furnished its contingent, and the market then presents a most singular and animated appearance. It is full of busy traffickers, and a mingled hum of voices is heard at a distance of several squares around it. All at once, the guard at the *cuartel* beats to arms, and the reclining soldiers leap up, seize their muskets, and range themselves stiffly along the front of their quarters. We look to see the occasion of the

* The three departments of Totonicapan, Quesaltenango, and Solola form what is called *Los Altos*, the Highlands—an elevated, mountainous, cold country, which, in 1838, constituted an independent State. The population of the three departments amounts to 201,000 inhabitants, of which 140,900 are Indians, and 62,000 whites and *Ladinos*. The Indians speak the *Quiché*, *Mani*, and *Sauval* dialects. Totonicapan, the principal town in the department of the same name, has a population of 20,000 souls. It is built on a high plateau, surrounded by mountains; the climate is cold and humid, and the soil of medium quality, but the inhabitants supply by their industry what it lacks in fertility. They raise principally wheat, potatoes, and others of the fruits of the temperate zone, but not of excellent quality. Quesaltenango is situated at the foot of a volcano, of which the last eruption was in 1758. The temperature here is probably lower than in any other part of Central America. Snow falls occasionally, but soon disappears, and the thermometer seldom stands long at the freezing point. The department produces wheat and maize in abundance; sheep are raised in great numbers, and the people carry on a large commerce in cereal grains, and in fabrics of cotton and wool.

sudden movement, and observe approaching a man of medium height, still young, with coal black hair and tawny complexion, who moves slowly up the arcade which leads to the house of the government. He is President Rafael Carrera, that redoubtable Indian who has overthrown the prestige and the authority of the Spanish race, and who now represents the material power of the State. He is dressed in ordinary costume, without any distinctive insignia of authority. The men of sinister mien who surround him, and whom you mistake for lackeys, are the aids of his Excellency—sad fellows, who have emerged like himself from the lower orders, bound to his fortunes, and who, to retain his favor, are ready to perform any kind of service. The President marches in silence, his head bent forward and his eyes fixed on the ground, without responding to the salutations of those whom he meets, and disappears in the palace. As for the people themselves, they scarcely notice an incident which takes place every day, and with which they are familiar.

The market of Guatemala is well supplied with vegetables, collected, it is true, from places not far distant yet possessing different climates. The fruits of Europe, few in number, and of inferior quality, are confounded with those of America, to such a degree, indeed, that the venders themselves are ignorant of their origin. Scattered at intervals, are little shops, where the Indians gather to obtain a cheap meal. They first lay in a stock of *tortillas* which are sold separately, and then hand in their porringer or calabash to be filled. For a *cuartillo* (three cents) they are furnished with a thick, red soup called *pulique*, composed of maize, peppers, and fragments of *tortillas*. Nothing can be less tempting than this national dish; indeed the general manner of serving repasts, in these Indian restau rants, is revolting in the extreme. Overtaken one day by a heavy shower, which obliged me to seek shelter under one of the galleries of the *plaza*, I employed my leisure moments in

watching the economy of these establishments. The one nearest me was kept by an old mulatress, squatting, like a monkey, beside a furnace which supported three earthen jars. When a customer presented himself, she drew from a basket near by a large plantain leaf, plunged her wrinkled hand into one of the earthen vessels, and drew out a quantity of the steaming contents which she spread over the leaf, then she added a layer of beans, and finally the same hand, still dripping, disappeared in the third jar and came out of a charming orange color, for it now contained the *pulique*, the highly seasoned soup, to which I have referred above, and which gives to her customer's dish the culminating touch of perfection. The culinary skill of the mulatress was certainly highly appreciated, to judge from the large demand for her delicacies.

Here and there huge parasols covered with palm leaves shade the booths where are sold syrups, *tiste*, and other refreshing or tonic beverages. In the distance, those naked, copper-colored men, who are seated on the church steps, apart from the movement and seductions of the place, are the Indians of the *tierra caliente*, resembling a flock of migrating birds; they are resting themselves, while making their simple breakfast on an ear of maize. This group, close at hand, is made up of sambos, a strange type of men, a cross between the Indian and negro, easily recognized by their sooty color, their brilliant eyes, and their crispy hair. They are bloodthirsty in disposition, and totally destitute of honor, morality, or principle. The inhabitants of Palin and Jocotenango are easily distinguished by their white cotton drawers, which do not reach to the knee; a peculiar costume, derived by their ancestors from the conquerors, to whom it was probably transmitted by the Moors. Here lounge the *ladinos*, under the shadow of the arcades, veritable *lazzaroni*, regaling themselves with boxes of sweetmeats; they have finished their day's labor, and are rapidly consuming its products; nor will

they return to work until driven to it by necessity. And lastly, those men with round jackets, who so carefully close their shops and barricade them within; they are the true citizens of the place. The rustic simplicity of their costume and manners, is not to be mistaken as belonging to the republican character, for they are full of aristocratic vanity, and feel deeply wounded if, when addressed, the title which they have seen fit to prefix to their names is omitted.

On the morning of the 19th of March, 1840, the *plaza* of which we are speaking was the scene of one of those melancholy and sanguinary episodes which characterize the civil wars of Spanish America. General Morazan, the chief of the Liberal party, had forced his way, by a brilliant but imprudent *coup de main*, into the city, and occupied the great square. But he soon found that his force was too small to maintain his position, surrounded as he was by vastly superior forces under Carrera. After a vigorous defence, he was compelled to escape with his main body in the night, leaving a detachment of two hundred men to hold the enemy in check, and cover the movement. In the morning the truth was discovered. The little band in the plaza was attacked at every point by overwhelming numbers. After a short and spirited resistance, it was compelled to lay down its arms, when the victors commenced an indiscriminate butchery of the men who had trusted to the conventionalities of war. As a fitting sequel to this bloody massacre, the commander of the corps was taken before Carrera and Paiz, his satellite, who had directed the carnage. They both fell upon him with blows, struck him to the ground, and forced their horses to trample on him, horribly mangling his body, while he vainly supplicated for death. Finally Paiz handed his own lance to one of the assassins in his suite, who drove it through the heart of the unfortunate officer, and relieved him from further brutalities.

A salient feature of the plateau of Guatemala is the ab-

sence of water on its surface, which is a result due to its geological constitution. The volcanic materials which principally compose the soil, have filled up the valleys to the depth of from three hundred and fifty to sixteen hundred feet, so that only the middle and superior portions of the mountains are visible to the eye. As a consequence, the streams, acting on this scoriaceous material, have worn their beds deep below the surface, to the original level of the earth, and formed those immense ravines which cut up the country between the 14th and 16th degrees of latitude.

In order to supply the city with water, therefore, it has been found necessary to construct two considerable aqueducts, reaching to the sources of the rivers Pinol and Mixco, situated three leagues to the southward. These supply, besides the public fountains and washing tanks, great numbers of private houses, in quantities proportioned to the rates paid by the proprietors. The water is not limpid, and requires to be filtered before it is used. The surplus is allowed to run through the streets, of which the slopes are toward the centre, and which are really the sewers of the city—thus accounting for the sweet brooks which some geographers have described to us as flowing through the principal streets. These overflow when obstructed in the least degree, and render impassable the lower parts of the city and its suburbs, where they form stagnant pools of intolerable odor, from which a few cultivators in the vicinity obtain the requisite material for irrigating and at the same time fecundating the soil of the plateau. Under better arrangements, it might be largely and usefully employed for this purpose. I may here mention, that the lands in the neighborhood of Guatemala are worth from $20 to $40 per acre, and that not far from forty thousand acres have the benefit of irrigation.

The material chiefly employed in building in Guatemala, is a kind of indurated clay, and a variety of puzzolana, which

come in irregular blocks about three feet square, and which acquire, in time, a considerable degree of hardness. These are laid in mortar, and the wall is then plastered over and whitewashed. The general character of the architecture is that which prevails in the south of Spain, where the Moors have left so many deep traces of their tastes and habits. Each house is built on a slightly elevated rectangle, and consists of a central court, surrounded by a corridor, on which all the apartments open. This arrangement, borrowed from the Orient, is sufficiently pleasant, but spoiled by the bad distribution of the rooms, in which light is altogether too economically dispensed. The doors are made without any regard to symmetry, the partitions are badly put together, the windows are unglazed, and the stranger soon discovers that the life which circulates here, is widely different from his own. Within a few years, the importation of furniture and other objects of luxury from Europe has been considerable; but notwithstanding the models and suggestions which the foreign articles afford, the corresponding objects manufactured in the country, are coarse, heavy, and inelegant. The city has very good masons and tolerable carpenters; but the incompetence of its tilers is unpleasantly manifest on the occasion of every rain. Most of the houses of the capital have within their courts one or more little gardens, which are invariably divided into compartments by lines of masonry. Under a temperate sky like this, the cultivation of flowers, and horticultural pursuits generally, might be one of the most agreeable modes of passing the time known to a society which is yet but imperfectly acquainted with the resources of the territory which it occupies. Without going beyond the adjacent woods and mountains it might find abundant specimens with which to begin its work. The orchidæ, for example, beautiful plants and of infinite varieties, might be reproduced in the town and its neighborhood in the greatest profusion and with trifling

care. But such are not the congenial occupations of the Spanish race. They require strong excitements to rouse them from their characteristic apathy and indolence. The gardens of the town are consequently badly cared for, and afford no objects worthy of interest to the stranger.

The mode of life of the people of Guatemala is very regular and uniform, and one is astonished, that in a capital containing forty thousand souls, enjoying a certain degree of wealth and comfort, and who pique themselves on their cultivation, there are so few dinners, balls, concerts, and those other pleasures which elsewhere animate the world of elegance, and bring together its members in a more agreeable and intimate union. I thought, at first, that this deficiency was due to the unhappy political divisions which had so long harassed the country, embittering the spirits of the people, and sowing among them distrust and suspicion. But I afterwards became satisfied that it was due to deeply-seated and characteristic traits of character. The wealthy class is made up of circumspect and parsimonious merchants, little interested in new things, who pass most of the day in their offices, and who shut themselves up in the evening to post up their books and calculate their balances. Their happiness seems to consist in accumulation, and they dread anything which tends to disturb the ordinary course of their existence. It is not because they are destitute of a sentiment of nationality, or are insensible to honors and distinctions; but their ambition is tempered with prudence, and in times of difficulty they are ready to compromise and adjust, rather than vindicate their rights by appeals to force or violence. A stranger has only to understand, that their courteous formulas, their expressions of sympathy and interest, and their flattering compliments are only vain formulas, which mean nothing, and that when they put their houses, their credit, and their fortune at his disposal, they do

not really intend to offer more than a glass of water, or at most a cigar.

The women, of a relatively good position, are not wanting in personal attractions. In an intellectual point of view they are just what might be expected: that is to say, possessed of considerable natural ability, but having a very limited education. As young girls they embroider and play upon the piano, but rarely go out. As wives they devote themselves to their families and household duties, and make excellent mothers. Gracefully submitting to the most complete subjection, they themselves narrow the circle of their dominion, and generally avoid the society of ladies from abroad, whose easier manners and better cultivated minds render them painfully conscious of their own inferiority. In a word, even civilized man here seem reduced to very slender proportions. Petty personal interests, the small vanities which make up the sum of his life, the monastic seclusion which circumscribes his horizon, are all reflected in his character, which is a compound of narrowness, timidity, and frivolity, plainly discernible in his face and general bearing.*

Religious ceremonies alone have power to awaken the city from the state of lethargy into which it subsides when not shaken by civil discord. Once, at the voice of the priests, whose power was sovereign, the whole population responded by forming processions, and bestowing those munificent donations which built up the monasteries and churches. Every citizen then belonged to some pious association, and on Saint's days wore the insignia of his office; and then it was that the whole city appeared to be only one vast brotherhood. But the revolution of 1829 struck a mortal blow at the monastic

* These observations may seem severe, and yet they are mild as compared with the picture drawn by a Guatemalian of his countrymen in a periodical many years back. See the *Gacéta de Guatemala* of the 20th February, 1797.

spirit. Although by a succeeding revolution the religious bodies have recovered some of their former immunities, still they have never regained their wealth, nor, as a consequence, their power. The influence, however, which, for several centuries, they have exercised over the character of Guatemalian society, is still evident, for the city itself has been very justly compared to a vast convent, and the dwellings to so many cells. The people always manifest great ardor for religious festivals, which, by their frequency, favor their propensity to idleness. They are passionately fond of the deafening sound of clanging bells, the noise of petards, and Indian music, a most cruel scourge to peaceable individuals. They also have an innocent admiration for the ridiculous ceremonies gone through with for the purpose of increasing their devotion, and which to the stranger seem all unworthy of the dignity and majesty of the Catholic faith.

I have frequently heard travellers reproached for omitting in their works all mention of the food and drink of the people in the countries which they visited. If the reader be one of those curiously inclined in this respect, he will not object to learning how these exigences of our human condition are satisfied under a climate considerably differing from our own.

The customs of the people of Guatemala, as concern their repasts, conform with the traditional practices observed in all Spanish America. Breakfast is taken at nine, dinner at two, and supper at eight or nine. These three meals are substantial. In the morning and evening they consist of chocolate, or coffee, beans prepared after the universal fashion, boiled eggs, and sometimes a dish of broiled meat. The principal culinary effort of the day, however, is dinner. After the soup, the *olla* is served with its retinue of vegetables and fruits. I believe there is no single production of the vegetable kingdom which does not take its place in the *olla*, from the ripe bananna down to the green ear of maize. The repast

is invariably terminated by some sweet dish, usually rice and milk, after which come preserves and *dulces* of various kinds. As for fruit, it is taken between meals, but never immediately after them, in accordance with hygienic principles rigorously observed in all Spanish America.

Wheaten bread is much used even in the poorest families: but wine is a luxury to be afforded only by the rich. Many persons are fond of taking, in the middle of the day, an Indian beverage called *tiste*, composed of parched maize, cacao, ginger and sugar, all reduced to powder and mixed with water. This beverage is not to be despised in a climate where stimulants are almost a necessity.

Hog's lard is used in the preparation of food, consequently swine are highly prized and very numerous in Guatemala. The style of cooking is simple and without much variety. The national dish, of which the people never weary, even though it appears twice a day, equally on the board of the rich and the poor, is black beans, or *frijoles*. Without these no breakfast or supper is complete. They are mixed with a few slices of onions and a spoonful of lard, and cooked over a slow fire. However simple this receipt, there is nevertheless, according to *connoisseurs*, a tact and talent in the proper preparation of the dish of which even the best of cooks are not always masters. The knowledge is inborn, and rarely to be acquired, so that in many houses the task of preparing the *frijoles* devolves upon a simple, but always a venerated servant, whom nature has favored with this precious gift!

The domestic economy of Spanish countries is rarely based on that wise forethought which regulates the laying in of provisions to conform with the season and state of the market. In Guatemala the people live literally from hand to mouth, purchasing in the morning only what may be requisite for the day, whether it be bread or salt, sugar or coal. Without possessing all the elements for good living, the city nevertheless

offers sufficient resources for a tolerably good fare at a small cost. Beef and mutton are cheap, and well flavored; pork is abundant; but the bread is neither white nor good. There is but little choice in vegetables; game is scarce, and there are scarcely any fish to be had at any price.

No one seems to be aware here that vegetables are susceptible of great improvement through proper cultivation. The art of producing good vegetables and fruits, and of diversifying and perfecting them by grafting, trimming, manuring, and daily care, is totally unknown. The indigenous vegetables which are used grow wild, while those brought from Europe soon lose the qualities which there recommend them, through want of care and culture. Wheat flourishes on the table lands at an elevation of from five to seven thousand feet. On lower grounds the stalk attains considerable vigor, but the yield of grain is small. This cereal, the introduction of which dates almost as far back in Guatemala as in Mexico, has greatly degenerated here, doubtless because the seed grain has not been renewed.*

The flour in use in Guatemala is ground in the rudest manner, and is delivered to the baker, in its rough state, who is himself obliged to sift it from the bran. An ordinary European or American flour mill, driven by a turbine wheel, adapted to the power of the little streams in the neighborhood of the city, I am convinced, would prove a good speculation. It certainly would give the people of the capital a better claim to that high civilization of which they flatter themselves they are such brilliant exponents. I may add that only one kind of bread is made, which is not sold by weight, but by the loaf.

* The introduction of wheat into Mexico took place about the year 1530. One of the negroes of Cortez, it is said, found accidentally a few grains of this cereal among the stock of rice sent out for the army; these were carefully collected, and were planted with great success.

When flour is dear the loaf is small; when abundant it is larger, but never of surprising dimensions.

I did not find, in Guatemala, any important plantations of the *agave americana*, from which, in Mexico, the natives procure the intoxicating drink known as *pulque*. Formerly, the Indians of Almolonga and San Gaspar had the privilege of supplying the capital with this liquor; but drunkenness became, in consequence, so general that one of the bishops was obliged to interdict its manufacture, under penalty of excommunication. Since then its production has entirely disappeared from the country. The agave only flowers after a growth of from eight to fifteen years. The moment the stalk begins to appear, the central cluster of leaves enveloping the bud is cut out, forming a sort of reservoir, which is rapidly filled by the ascending sap, and is converted into a kind of vegetable fountain, which may be emptied several times a day for a period of three months. A single plant will yield from thirty to two hundred and thirty gallons of juice, according to the quality of the soil, which, after fermentation, is highly intoxicating. The plants die after the operation which I have recounted, but the suckers which start from their roots perpetuate the plantation. I am surprised that no one has undertaken the production of *pulque* in Algeria, where the *agave americana* has been naturalized for two centuries, and where it propagates itself spontaneously, with the greatest luxuriance.

Notwithstanding the diversity of races and castes which exists in Guatemala, it is difficult to find a picturesque costume among them all. The men, in easy circumstances, follow the European styles, and as the climate is variable, they change from cloth to light clothing of cotton or linen, according to the state of the weather.* Sometimes, however, they

* Careful meteorological observations have been made at Guatemala, during the last three or four years, by the members of the newly-established

unite extremes, and cover a light garb, of twilled muslin or nankeen, with a vast blue cloak. The ladies still wear the Spanish mantilla, especially on grand occasions; but this costume, so noble and graceful, has not escaped the fluctuations of all things human, and is gradually giving way to the Parisian styles of dress. The garb of the people at large is simple in the extreme. The men wear a kind of jacket of thick woolen cloth of native manufacture, pantaloons of simple cotton cloth, a palm-leaf hat covered with oiled cloth, and a *sarape* of many colors, which supplies the place of the Mexican *poncho*. The dress of the women is in no way peculiar or remarkable. That of the Indian women is the simplest, and consists of a piece of blue cotton cloth fastened around the body above the hips, to which is sometimes added a short white chemise, occasionally embroidered, but usually plain. Their hair, interbraided with a red cord, is wound around their temples, where it forms a sort of crown.

The city is without a public promenade; it has no cafés, no reading room; nor, in fact, any places for reunion or for pleasure. It is equally destitute of a theatre,* the lack of

Jesuits' college. The results, for the several months of the year 1857, were as follows: Average maximum of thermometer 88.7° Fah.; average minimum, 38.9°; average mean, 65°. Number of inches of rain, 54½. Clear days, 131; clouded, 139; obscure, 95. Average mean of barometer, 25.23. Number of days of rain, 156; fog, 87; hail, 1. Number of days of lightning, 113; thunder, 36; storms, 57; earthquakes, 7.—*T.*

* Since M. Morelet's visit, the acquisition of California by the United States, and its rapid development consequent on the discovery of its mineral wealth, have given a new and powerful impulse to the Spanish American States on the Pacific, including Guatemala, which has doubled its commerce within the past ten years. The establishment of a line of steamers along the coast of Central America, between San José and Panama, has also brought the country in closer relations with the great centres of civilization in Europe and America. The effect in Guatemala has been perceptible in many important respects. Among other ameliorations a line of coaches has been established between La Antigua and the capital, a number of private carriages have been introduced into the city, and a large and elegant theatre has been

which is supplied by a kind of arena for bull fights, of which the profits (which are from ten to twenty thousand dollars annually) go to the hospital, in virtue of a royal decree, which the revolutions have respected. And what is worse, the city is without a hotel of any kind, and the stranger, unless provided with good letters of introduction, is obliged to seek an asylum in one of the miserable *posadas* or *mesones*, veritable caravanseries, cut up into little, dark, dirty, dilapidated rooms, or rather pens, fetid, and infested with fleas, *niguas*, and all kinds of vermin, which are the resorts of the Indian marketmen or peddlers. One must be well hardened to inconveniences and disgusts of all kinds, who ventures on a sojourn in one of these dens.

Scientific instruction lacks much of what it should be in Guatemala. How could it be otherwise with a people who, for three centuries, were oppressed by a *régime* opposed to the dissemination of intelligence, and who, since they obtained their liberty, have been almost constantly involved in civil wars? There are two principal educational establishments, the University and the Tridentine college or seminary, founded in 1690, besides several schools for the benefit of the working classes. The nominal basis of instruction is little different from that adopted in France. In the University there are chairs of Greek and Latin, mathematics and philosophy; but except in law, or rather chicanery, which it is useful to acquire in a country fertile in litigation, all the instruction is of the most superficial character. The professors do not in the least exert themselves to develop the faculties of their scholars with reference to their social condition, or the places

erected (of which an engraving is elsewhere given) which probably equals any other in Spanish America in size and style, and which may be compared favorably with those of our own country. Whether the performances to which it is devoted harmonize in all respects with the edifice, and are worthy of it, remains to be told to us by some future traveller.—T.

which they may be called to fill, and they leave their masters without any just idea of the world, without fixed principles to guide them, and, I may add, without even a knowledge of the physical laws of the universe.

The public or common schools are twenty-seven; eleven for boys and sixteen for girls. They are sustained, in great part, by private contributions, but hardly seem to come up to the expectations of their founders. In order that they should yield any beneficial fruits, it is necessary not only that they should be better frequented, but that the moral education of the pupils, the real basis of the social edifice, should take a first place in the system of instruction, and finally that the lessons of the master should not be nullified by the bad example of the family. But we can hardly look for this in a town where the inferior classes have vegetated for cycles in complete ignorance of their rights and duties. We may lay the blame of this state of things, with better reason, on the old colonial administration; on those governors who put up public employment at auction, and taught the nation to despise merit and honor money; on the officers of the customs, who organized fraud; on the judges who trafficked with justice, and on the clergy who, by their cupidity and the license of their habits, brought contempt on religion, and corrupted the public morals.

The people still cherish the formulas of Castilian civility, which their ancient masters seem to have regarded as the essence and end of education; but they have not yet clearly recognized the difference between right and wrong; and, destitute equally of private honesty or public virtue, they live in sloth and ignorance, under the empire of the meanest passions and the grossest superstitions.

Mechanical industry, that important and interesting branch of popular instruction, is equally in arrear in Guatemala. I

have already alluded to the use which the Indian makes of his *machete*, a simple hunting knife, with which he not only opens his path in the woods, but clears his fields, builds his house, and fabricates his furniture. The artisans of the capital, almost all of whom are *ladinos*, are not much better off in respect of instruments; they are furthermore still ignorant of the benefits of association and the division of labor. And when we consider the limited number and imperfect character of their tools, we are led to believe that such skill as they possess, and their manual dexterity, are inherited from their Indian progenitors. They imitate but they do not invent, and carry no branch of manufacture to perfection. I sought in vain, among all the products of their labor and skill, for a single article worthy to be carried home as a souvenir of the place. My acquisitions in this respect were limited to a simple jacket of *jerga*, and a straw hat, both the veritable handiwork of the Indians.

The interior commerce of the country would soon be reduced to a minimum, were it not that the climate, by its diversity, forces an exchange of products. Traffic in maize is however the principal form of speculation in the country, since it rarely happens that there is a good harvest of this indispensable article of food, in all parts of the State at the same time.

The exterior trade of the country increased greatly after the overthrow of the royal authority, and the substitution of more liberal commercial regulations; but its activity was not sustained; one article of export after another fell off, and now cochineal is about the only product sent abroad, to cover the imports of the country. This decline is not at all surprising. No kind of enterprise can flourish in a country agitated by civil wars, and where material interests are destitute of the least security. Besides, the roads of the country are

simply detestable, and the transportation of goods is slow, expensive and insecure, to such a degree as to consume their value.*

Among all the misfortunes which have happened to Guatemala, since the period of its independence, none have been more deplorable than that which befel it on the day when, after twenty-five years of intestine war, it bowed its neck under the yoke of an Indian. The genealogy of Rafael Carrera is not clearly established, not even in the town where he was born; but it is well known that he sprung from the lowest class of society. He was born in the suburb of Candelaria, and the occupations of his youth conformed to the obscurity of his origin. After a time he became a servant in Amatitan, where he finally set up a traffic in pigs. In 1837 he appeared, for the first time, on the political scene, taking part in the troubles of the country in the character of a simple bandit, chief of a sanguinary *guerilla*, ravaging the province without mercy, and without respecting any party. The following year, having in the meantime received large accessions to his strength, and his ambitious instincts having been developed with success, he surprised the capital itself, at the head of a vast body of barbarians, and gave the frightened inhabitants an hour to choose between pillage or the payment of a ransom. Such was his beginning; but it is not my purpose to trace the steps whereby he rose, in the midst of anarchy and blood, from the rank of a pig-driver, to that of chief of the State. The history of his career is sufficiently well known to all persons interested, and would hardly be worth recounting here.

* M. Morelet here goes into various estimates of the value of the productions of the country, its exports, imports, etc. But all these have undergone a great change since his visit, and it is therefore unnecessary to repeat his statistics. For an abstract of the trade, etc., of the State, brought up to the present time, see *Appendix*.—T.

It must be admitted that Carrera is no ordinary man. This is sufficiently evident from the fact, that without political experience, without education, or other guide than his own instincts, he has known how to retain the power won by his sword. The leading members of all parties have, at one time or another, abased themselves before him, in the hope of making him their instrument; but he has played with them all, and contrived to profit by their antagonisms. His *rôle* is a difficult one, for he is only supported by a set of timid men, gathered around him from necessity, or by sycophants without position or character. For a long time he refused the presidency, alleging his want of education and the incompatibility of his habits with the dignity of the position.* Flattery, nevertheless, finally smoothed down all obstacles, and he has conformed to the more obvious outward requirements of his office, retaining only his round jacket and straw hat. As I have already said, he is a man of medium height, with a clear predominance of Indian blood in his veins, which is indicated equally by the shade of his hair, the scantiness of his beard, and the slight obliquity of his eyes, which he keeps habitually bent downwards. Active, unscrupulous, obstinate as only an Indian can be, he is taciturn in his humor, and violent and sanguinary in temper; nevertheless, he is not without a qualified generosity, and since he became "master of the situation," has used his power with moderation.

I have no great reason to be proud of my relations with this high personage. Conducted to his palace by one of the

* Since M. Morelet wrote, by acts consummated in 1854, Carrera has been made President for life, (*Presidente Vitalico*), with power to name his successor! His titles, as printed in the official acts, are, "His most excellent Senor, Don Rafael Carrera, President for life of the Republic, Captain General of the Forces, General Superintendent of the Treasury, Commander of the Royal Order of Leopold of Belgium, Honorary President of the Institute of Africa, decorated with various insignia for actions in war," etc., etc.—T.

leading citizens of Guatemala, I waited in vain for the honor of a presentation. At the end of three quarters of an hour, he came out from his cabinet, crossed to the other side of the apartment, and disappeared, without giving us the compliment of a look, much to the consternation of my companion. It was in vain that I endeavored to convert our common misfortune into a joke; the smile did not return to his lips. In fact, I have always thought that I owe to him whatever there was of disgrace in my reception, or rather non-reception, for an audience had been graciously accorded to me through the medium of the Minister of the Interior. Perhaps it may be necessary, in a country where the soil is so slippery, to have a special care in choosing a guide to lead you!

The history of Carrera has singular likeness with that of the ancient dictator of Buenos Ayres. Both were from the lowest rank, and passed the early years of their lives in humble and dependent conditions; and both, if report runs true, were driven from the employ of their masters for acts of indelicacy. Without education, but with active energies and indomitable resolutions, both profited by the disturbances of their respective countries, and both commenced their military career by an invasion of the capital—Carrera at the head of his Indians, and Rosas at the head of his *gauchos*. The elevation of both dates from the same audacious aggression. But, without pushing the parallel further, it is only necessary to add that they used their powers differently; the first used his to paralyze his enemies; the second to annihilate them. Rosas was a pitiless despot, but at the same time an able diplomatist, far superior to Carrera in capacity, the extent of his views, and the part which he played in his country, which is not without its recognition in Europe.

The military force of Guatemala is principally recruited among the Indians, who form its permanent nucleus. This

nucleus is the contingent from Mita and Santa Rosa, a corps made up of devoted friends of Carrera, who guard the capital. With the garrisons of Quesaltenango, La Antigua, Amatitan and Isabal, they number about five hundred men. But the entire effective force of the State is not less than four thousand. These soldiers receive two rials (twenty-five cents) per day, out of which they clothe and support themselves. Their officers are veritable *sbirros*, who owe their promotion to some action alike violent and detestable. In times of peace their martial air imposes on peaceable citizens; but I am assured that their warlike demonstrations are very much modified before an enemy.* In times of danger, Carrera raises the Indians on whom he can depend, *en masse*, and incorporates them in the ranks.

From Guatemala I made a trip to the Pacific, passing through La Antigua, the old capital, grand even in ruin; through the busy town of Amatitan, the watering-place of Guatemala, surrounded by its broad cactus fields, glistening like silver under their precious coating of cochineal; past the

* During a period of twenty-one years, from 1821 to 1842, not less than fifty-two battles were fought in Guatemala, with an aggregate loss of two thousand two hundred and ninety-one men killed and four hundred and seventy-one wounded. The most important affair was that of the 19th of March, 1840, when Carrera triumphed definitively over Morazan. On that occasion the loss was four hundred and fourteen killed and one hundred and seventy-two wounded. The aggregates for the five States of the old confederation for the period referred to, were one hundred and forty-three battles, seven thousand and eighty-eight killed, and one thousand seven hundred and eighty-five wounded. Whatever may have been their results in other respects, it will be seen that open warfare in Central America has not been alarmingly bloody. More men have probably fallen by assassination and military and political executions, than in the field.

wild and magnificent falls of San Pedro Martyr; across the burning plain of Esquintla, to the miserable little port of Istapa, at the mouth of the river Michatoyat, where Alvarado built his ships for his expedition to Peru. Here I received such advices from home as to require my immediate return to France. I went back, therefore, to Guatemala, where I remained only long enough to complete my preparations for my departure, by way of Isabal and the English establishment of Belize, for Europe. The journey was performed without any remarkable incident, and we reached France in the midst of the exciting events which followed on the flight of King Louis Philippe, and which have made the year 1848 one of the most memorable in history.

The year following, my faithful servant and friend Morin, infected by the golden fever which then raged throughout Europe and the Americas, became eager to try his fortune in the new and veritable El Dorado of California. Young, robust, courageous, and accustomed to exposure and fatigue, he had every chance of success in his favor. I felt bound to second his views, and had the satisfaction of seeing him depart, in search of fortune, under the most favorable auspices. But I regret to add that I never heard of him again, and that my enquiries as to his fate have been unattended with success.

As for myself, I returned to civilized life, with my mind filled with lasting and pleasing recollections of my adventures among the grand forests and sublime scenes of an almost untracked but deeply-interesting portion of the New World. I still dream of its splendid tropical nights, and often hear the roar of its unnamed rivers in my ears. It was in the seclusion of those magnificent regions, where the dominion of man is so restrained, and where man himself sinks into such insignificant proportions, that my spirit received its profoundest impressions

of the majesty and mercy of God, leading me, by an irresistible impulse, to bow my face to the earth, and to exclaim, with the Psalmist,

> "Thy knowledge is too wonderful for me;
> It is high; I cannot attain unto it.
> Whither, Lord, shall I go from thy Spirit?
> Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
> If I ascend up to heaven, thou art there;
> If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there!
> If I take the wings of the morning,
> And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
> Even there shall thy hand lead me,
> And thy right hand shall cover me."

APPENDIX.

A.

MEMOIR

READ BY M. ARTHUR MORELET BEFORE THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF FRANCE.

THE Academy did me the honor, some time since, to encourage, by special instructions, the researches which I proposed to make in a part of the American continent which had never been explored by naturalists. I shall now attempt to give some account of the principal results of my subsequent journey. On leaving the island of Cuba, I directed my course towards Yucatan, with the view of visiting its interior districts and exploring the low chain of mountains which extends from one extremity of the peninsula to the other, and which seems to belong to the irregular group of Peten. But the political troubles of the country which broke out before I could reach there, forced me to change my plans, and direct my steps to the Lagoon of Terminos, and the island of Carmen, the *entrepôt* of the trade in logwood. Here commenced the hazards and difficulties of my journey. The Rio Usumasinta, which flows into the Lagoon, and of which the uncertain course is only conjecturally laid down in our maps, afforded a natural route for penetrating into the interior of this portion of the American continent. I ascended this river, which is much the largest of Central America, for more than a hundred leagues, to the remotest limits of Tabasco, where my further progress was impeded by falls and rapids. Hence, after traversing eighty leagues of unbroken forests, I reached the hitherto almost unknown district of Peten, which depends politically on the State of Guatemala.

This mysterious country, isolated in the midst of a wilderness, seemed to promise to reward my activity; but the interest which it

afforded me, in respect of natural history, proved to be entirely secondary. I found here the same climate, soil, and productions of Yucatan, with only some diversity in the lower forms of animal life. The establishment of the fact, however, is not without its importance in filling a blank in our previous knowledge of tropical America.

Proceeding from Peten towards the south-west, I found the surface of the country more broken, and soon encountered the ramifications of the Cordilleras which diversify the province of Vera Paz. The ravines or beds of torrents here afforded me my only roads, and led me from mountain to mountain, to the temperate regions where flourish the arborescent ferns, and finally to the salubrious plateau of Guatemala. Hence I continued my journey to the monotonous shores of the Pacific, where I received intelligence which obliged me to retrace my steps to Guatemala, and take the speediest route to Europe.

Such is a rapid outline of my travels, and I now proceed to speak of the results which attended them with equal brevity. I may remark at the outset that the part of Central America which claimed most of my attention, and which is included in the State of Guatemala, exhibits in its physical characteristics, as also in its natural productions generally, a striking analogy, as well with the hot as with the temperate portions of Mexico. Indeed, the entire isthmus seems to have been developed under the same conditions. It is only as we approach Panama and the South American continent, that nature begins to invest herself with new forms in a manner sufficiently general to modify sensibly the physiognomy of the country. The collections which I made, especially in the vegetable and animal kingdoms, support this observation, as would also the mineralogical specimens which I got together, had not the accidents of a long and troublesome journey reduced them to an insignificant number.

The cryptogamous plants are represented in my collection by ninety species, and the phanerogams, of which the specific classification is not yet complete, by forty different genera. I may specify a magnificent shrub, with thick and coriaceous leaves, constituting a new genera (*Sarcomeris*) of the family of Melastomaceæ, a native of the Isle of Pines. The conifers from which this little island takes its name, are of two species, distinct from any known in Europe, and particularly from the *P. occidentalis* of Swartz, which grows also in the Antilles. The latter has five leaves, while those of the Isle of Pines have but two or three united on the same stem. It is well known that these trees, by an organic arrangement which was for a long time considered exceptional,

but of which we have now numerous examples, grow at the level of the sea, under a burning sky, and mingle their leaves with those of the palm and other trees purely tropical.

I shall not stop to mention the grains, resins, specimens of woods, etc., which form part of my collection.

The animal kingdom afforded me, in the inferior classes, a considerable number of sponges, star fishes, echinoderms, and crustacea, of which the greater part are new. Of insects my collection has one hundred and eleven coleoptera, forty lepidoptera, and twenty-seven specimens of other orders, in all one hundred and seventy-eight species, of which one sixth have never been described. The mollusca, which are most easily preserved, are more numerous. I attached myself by preference to the terrestrial and fluvitile varieties, which are less known to naturalists than those which inhabit the ocean. They are upwards of three hundred in number, of which at least one half are without a name in science. I confine myself to specifying two Helices, one from the Isle of Pines, remarkable for the elegant indentation of its keel, and the other from the mountains of Cuba, surpassing in size all known species. The Melaniæ, very different from those of North America, are equally remarkable for their extraordinary proportions. Finally, a Unio from Cuba, the first which has been brought from the Antilles.

Among the vertebrata I obtained a complete series of the fishes found in the great lake of Itza, as also a great number of species from the streams of Vera Paz. These fishes, almost all unknown, include one new genus of thirty-two species. To the specimens preserved in alcohol, I have added notes and drawings from the life.

The reptilia, consisting of one hundred and four specimens, represent fifty-six species, of which six are undescribed, and five remain in doubt. Some of these specimens are very rare, and are not to be found in the Museum of Natural History. The saurians have afforded a new and peculiar genus. I allude to the crocodile of Peten, a species hitherto unknown (*C. Moreleti*), an *Emys* equally new, a very curious triton, of which the organic characteristics are still uncertain, the *Rhinophrine*, a singular batrachian, which has an equal claim on the attention of scientific men, besides various Boas, Crotali, and Trigoncephali.

Birds, which from their powers of locomotion are more extensively diffused over the continent, did not afford me so rich a field for discovery. Among seventy species represented in my collection, but two or three are new.

Finally, mammals, fifty-seven specimens, including the stag of Peten, a great variety of squirrels, and many other little rodents.

Such is a summary of the results of my journey and explorations in the department of natural history. The specimens I have enumerated are deposited in the Museum, in the hands of competent professors, who will make a just use of the materials I have given them for the benefit of science. I undertook my explorations under the sole incitement of my love for natural history, and with, I hope, an honorable spirit of national emulation. I conducted them at my own cost, in the midst of obstacles and dangers which can hardly be considered imaginary. If what I have done shall meet the approval of the Academy, and be accepted as a proper compliance with its instructions, I shall consider myself amply rewarded for all that I have undergone and accomplished.

B.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE PROVINCE OF VERA PAZ, IN GUATEMALA, AND OF THE INDIAN SETTLEMENTS OR PUEBLOS ESTABLISHED THEREIN. BY FR. ALONZO DE ESCOBAR. *From the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London.* Vol. xi., pp. 89–97.

THE province of Vera Paz may be divided into the high country (*alta*), the low (*baxa*), and the very low (*muy baxa*). This division opens to view the natural advantages of an intertropical territory, comprising a variety of climates, and capable of rearing and maturing the vegetable products of both the East and West Indies. In the southern part of the province, and towards the capital of Guatemala, are the settlements of Chól, Rabinal, Cubulco, and Salamá. These, having a climate ordinarily hot and dry, must be assigned to the low division of the province.

Of the principal rivers towards the south, the first is the Rio Grande, or the Motagua, the sources of which are on a mountain in the settlement of San Tomas Chichicastenango, in the jurisdiction (Alcaldía Mayor) of Sololá: passing through this district, it divides it from that of Zacatepeques, and afterwards entering the district of Chiquimula, it takes the name of Motagua, and flows into the Atlantic ocean. The river Salamá rises in a mountain opposite to the San Geronimo estate (hacienda), in a tract called by the Indians Chirremundo, and flows by the

town of Salamá, from which it takes its name. Joining in Panzuh with the river Cachil, which comes from the mountain of Matanzas, it flows on until, at the Sta. Anna estate, it unites with the river Chixoy, called also Sacapulas, the sources of which lie in some mountains within the jurisdiction of Totonicapam. A little further on it receives the river Cachecla, descending from the mountain of Pambach, which lies on one side of the settlement of Taltic. The most information which I possess respecting this river (the Salamá) is, that where it flows by the mountain of Chammá, it is already of great magnitude.

In this (the southern) quarter are found many sulphureous and chalybeate springs. Proceeding from Guatemala, after passing the Rio Grande, we meet the Rio de la Agua Caliente, so named from the hot water flowing into it from numerous boiling springs. In the settlement of Salamá, near the banks of the river, are several hot water springs, popularly called the Licks (Chupaderos), because they are sought by the cattle on account of their saltness. Sheep, drinking those waters, soon grow fat, and their flesh acquires a delicious flavor. A great mistake prevails among the people in Guatemala, who ascribe to those sulphureous waters a remedial virtue in the endemic disease of goître (güegüecho); and those who suffer from it consequently come and reside for a time in the settlement of Amatitan. But the experience of the country proves the contrary fact, since those dwelling near the banks of the Rio de la Agua Caliente, and the people of Salamá, who drink its waters, are commonly affected with goître. A similar observation has been made by Alcedo, respecting the river Guali, in the kingdom of Grenada, where the *güegüecho* of our people is called *coto*.

Twelve leagues from Salamá, on the summit of the mountain, after the forests of Patal, on the royal road, stands the settlement of Taltic; and four leagues further on is the settlement of Santa Cruz; that of San Cristobal lying on the left of the road; four leagues more reach the imperial city of Cobán, wherein resides the alcalde mayor of the province. One of the seven divisions of Cobán S. Juan Alcalá, was originally peopled with the Indians of Chisec, or the tract of country north of the city. A league from San Juan Alcalá is the settlement of S. Pedro Carchá, south of which, little more than a league, lies that of S. Juan Chamelco. The climate of these settlements is cold and excessively humid, on account of the heavy rains that fall all the year round; although there is a transient summer in March and April, when the sun warms the earth a little, to prepare it for the speedy recommencement of winter. But this applies only to the settlements on the

summit of the mountains, and not to those below, which have six months of summer, and six of winter, as is generally the case in America. An unclouded sky is a rare spectacle in those regions; but when bright weather is coming, the river Chixoy announces it at San Pedro, and the river Chico, in Cobán, by a fitful murmuring in the stillness of the night. However, in compensation for bad autumnal and summer seasons, these mountains never suffer from drought, but the trees and herbage continue fresh and green for the whole year round. The coldness and wet are most sensibly felt in November, December, and January. During the rest of the year the air is mild and agreeable. The stormy winds serve to cool the low country towards the south. The day on which the north wind begins to blow in the mountains receives from the Indians a particular name (*boc*), because with it begins the return of the water-fowl.

The mountains are so many and so close together that there is hardly half a league of level land to be met with in all this high country. Whichever way the eyes be turned they are sure to meet with mountains, most of them of great elevation. Hence it is that the roads here are extremely rugged and precipitous, insomuch that it is only on the royal road, and in tolerably dry weather (which comes but seldom), that it is possible to travel. After rain has fallen, as the roads are all up and down, and of slippery clay, it must be a very good and practised beast that does not fall at every step. Everywhere, indeed, there is danger of falling; even in the passages and court-yards of the houses, which become so slippery when wet, that treading them is like walking upon soap.

For the Indians, however, there is no road too bad; and where no beast can keep its feet, they go and carry loads without difficulty. Herein is seen the power of habit, since these people beginning at six years old to carry burdens, become such active carriers as to be able to make journeys of two hundred leagues, or more, without suffering, when the best mule, if unshod, becomes so lame as to be unable to move a step. I have often seen them, after having hurt themselves by stumbling, hold a burning skewer near to the wound or bruise, to prevent inflammation, and start fresh on their journey the day after this painful treatment.

When on a journey they carefully avoid drinking cold water, and quench their thirst with water as warm as can be taken. Their ordinary food is a little roasted maize paste, called totoposte, which they crumble into boiling water, and so eat it; or else they warm it entire with chile (*capsicum*) and salt; and this is their whole nourishment.

Wherever they stop they stretch themselves at full length, although it be on the stones, extending to the utmost their legs and arms, and by this means they soon regain their vigor. There are reckoned to be a thousand Indians in Cobán alone; above three hundred in S. Pedro Carchá, and two hundred in S. Juan Chamelco, not including those who wander over the whole kingdom buying and selling.* They usually take to Guatemala for sale a great quantity of rice, and thread of all sizes. To Chiquimula, Zacapa, and San Salvador, they take blankets, knife-blades, Indian mantles, pimento grown in the country, hammocks, lassos, and a few other articles; and in return they bring back money and cattle, which they go for to Esquipulas, Cucuyagua, and Gracias, drawing also from Sonsonate and the Salinas the salt which constitutes one of the principal articles of their trade.

But to return to the Cordilleras of towering mountains which traverse the high country to an immense distance. Those mountain tracts still remain quite unknown even to the Indians themselves, who never penetrate into them except by the road to Petén. South of Cobán and of S. Pedro Carchá extend the mountains of Patal, which separate the low settlements of Salamá, Rabinal, Cubulco, and Chól, from those of the highlands; and further on, in the same direction, are the lofty summits of Chichen, Chitzujay, Zaamico, Zacampat, Quixmez, Iloman, Chixoth, Guayona, Chidla, and Zacriyl, the peak of which is laid bare by the fire and smoke that have at times issued from it. Besides these is seen Xucamel, the highest of all these mountains, rising between Chichen and Chitzujay, with its summit towards the south-east, its branches extending to the lake of Bodegas.

East of San Pedro are the mountains of Chintyl and Chacalté; after which follow those of Chicac and Tamajul; beyond which the Indians penetrate no further in that direction. The limit of their excursions is, they say, three days from the settlement; beyond it the country is reported to be uninhabited, and to be filled with rugged mountains, which, according to their accounts, I should suppose to run towards the port occupied by the English in Belize.

To the north-east are situate San Augustin Lanquin and Santa Maria Cahabón. The first of these settlements is twenty leagues, the second twenty-eight leagues, from San Pedro, by roads of the worst description, over mountains named Ziguanja, Chirreguim, Talal, and

* These figures are considerably below those given by M. Morelet, and evidently too small. Juarros, the historian of Guatemala, who wrote in 1808, puts the number of parishioners attached to the church in Cobán, at 12,435; San Pedro Carcha, 5,917; Cahabon, 8,588; Salamá, 1,600, etc.

Chimeleo. At the chief stations on those roads, are lodges (ranches) for the travellers to and from these settlements, or to the castle of Petén.

San Pedro confines towards the north on the widely-spread mountains of Toccalá, Zucha and Chiacam; and in the same direction occur the plains of Ivovilá, and of Babál, with the mountains of Zaclech; the last being accessible only to the Indians, who advance a three days' journey into this impracticable region for the sake of collecting some fruits and other productions, but have no further knowledge of that country, which they describe as uninhabited.

On the north-west are the mountains of Chisec, anciently inhabited by the Indians now established in the Alcalá division of Cobán. In the same mountains the Indians of Cobán still grow their cotton and keep their plantations of achiote* and cacao; not that they plant or do much more than take advantage of the earth's spontaneous production. Two days from the mountains of Chisec begins the central ridge of the high land, on which are plains of boundless extent, with one of the largest rivers of the kingdom winding through them.

The Rio de la Pasion rises among the mountains of Chammá, in the lake of Lacandón. It flows at first from west to east; and when it passes by the mountains of Chisec, north of Cobán, it is already fifty yards wide, and twenty feet deep. In winter its width increases to half a league, or considerably more, according to the violence of the rains, and its depth, of course, is at the same time augmented. On reaching the mountains of Petén, it is joined by the rivers Santa Isabel and Mataquece, with many other streams, till at last it unites with the rivers of Usumasintæ, and finally discharges itself northwards into the sea, west of Campeachy and the Laguna de Terminos, forming the great delta called the Barra de San Pedro y San Pablo. The kingdom of Guatemala can never be said to have attained prosperity so long as the banks of this great river remain uninhabited and uncultivated.

On the banks of the river de la Pasion dwell many unconverted Indians, as at Petén and towards the mountains of Zaclech, whither the people of Cobán are fearful of going, lest they should fall in with the Lacandónes. This river is the Nile of Guatemala, fertilizing with its waters the country through which it flows. It abounds in fish: the land near it is well suited for the cultivation of coffee; and its cacao is equal, if not superior, to that of Soconusco, and in great abundance,

* The achiote (so called from the native Mexican name achiotl) is the shrub yielding the red pulp from which is prepared the dye or drug called in commerce annotto. It is the *bixa orellana* of Linnæus. The names *bixa* and *roucou*, which latter is used by the French, were both learned from the natives of Brazil.

though unaided by cultivation. The sugar-cane is said to attain there in its wild state a degree of perfection unknown elsewhere; nor does it require irrigation, so rich and humid is the soil. The best dye-woods, as well as caoba, (mahogany,) cedar, and other timber for ship-building, may be had in any quantities on the banks of that river. These fertile lands are far more valuable than mines of the precious metals. But to return to the description of the country round San Pedro.

Between the west and the north-east lie the mountains of Chammá, inhabited by the wild Indians of Lacandón, who gave so much trouble from the first conquest of these countries till the end of the seventeenth century, when the greater part of them were reduced to subjection. Our historians assign to those Indians a great extent of territory, which in fact they still possess, and it appears to me that, for the sake of avoiding confusion, a distinction ought to be drawn between the western and eastern Lacandónes. All the country lying on the west, between the bishopric of Ciudad Real and the province of Vera Paz, was once occupied by the western Lacandónes. Some of them may still remain there in the recesses of the mountains, the extent and intricacy of which make it difficult to explore them perfectly.

The country of the eastern Lacandónes may be considered as extending from the mountains of Chammá, a day and a half from Cobán, along the borders of the river de la Pasion to Petén, or even further, as this nation, by means of the numerous canoes with which it trades on the river, asserts the occupancy of a territory a hundred leagues in length, without having therein any fixed abode; for if they be discovered in one place, they immediately take to their canoes, with their wives and children, and go off to some other; and hence many unconverted Indians still remain in Petén.

With the subdued Lacandónes, who were taken at the end of the last century from the mountains of Chammá, the Dominicans founded San Marco de Cobán; and some of their descendants there still speak among themselves the Ecolchi language, which is that of the Lacandónes. The division of San Tomas Apóstol is as ancient as the Conquest, and was peopled with Lacandón Indians dwelling to the north of Cobán. In like manner San Domingo de Cobán was established with Indians taken from the mountains of Chichen and Xucamel. The four divisions of San Pedro Carchá were peopled with the Indians of the immediate neighborhood. In general the Indian communities of San Pedro and Cobán still gather the produce of those tracts of country which anciently belonged to their respective ancestors.

In the lowest part of the province, north of San Pedro, lie the settlements of San Agustin Lanquin and Santa Maria Cahabón, in a remarkably hot and humid climate. Twenty-three leagues from Cahabón, in the midst of inaccessible mountains and morasses, dwell the Chóls and Manchés, the subjugation and conversion of which Indian nations began in 1675. On that occasion were founded the settlements of San Lucas Zaclocz, Nuestra Señora del Rosario, and Santiago. Further on, near the river Yaxjá, was established the settlement of San Jacinto Matzin, and four leagues higher up San Pedro and San Pablo Yxil: at another station, four leagues on, was fixed the settlement of San José May, and subsequently those of Asuncion, San Miguel Manché, San Francisco Socomo, and San Fernando Axoy, making altogether eleven settlements in the province of Chól and Manché.

But this unlucky province did not last long, and with it vanished the hopes of enlightening and converting a numerous aboriginal population. The Indians, taxed excessively on one hand, and on the other terrified with threats of force, of which they had had some experience, suddenly took to flight, withdrawing to the most remote and trackless mountain region, and have never been seen from that time to the present. Only a small remnant of them was at that time brought together and placed in the settlement of Santa Cruz del Chól, between the Rio Grande and Rabinál; so few, indeed, remained that perhaps there is now in that place hardly one Indian descended from the original Chól and Manché settlers.

It is doubtful where these two Indian nations, viz., the Chóls and the Manchés, eventually fixed themselves; but it is likely that some of them retired, beyond the mountains of Chammá, to the river Zaclech, in order to unite with the Lacandónes, who, as it was afterwards known, had numerous canoes, with which they carried on traffic on that river, both those originally established there and the new comers. The greater number of the emigrants, however, probably went eastward, to the neighborhood of the sea.

From Cahabón the road for Petén leads, in ten days, over uninhabited mountains, to the settlement of San Luis, which is the first in the jurisdiction of that government (Presídio). The opening of this road gave rise to much altercation between the Alcalde Mayor Pacheco, and the engineer, Don Juan Antonio Carvajal; the former opposing in every way the decisions of the latter, who had been appointed for the special purpose of constructing this road, but who never completed the work, because, after surveying an immense extent of mountainous country,

he found it impossible to make the road where the Alcalde Mayor proposed. His instructions were to open a line of road, avoiding as much as possible the main chain of mountains. But this was never done; for in going to Petén at the present day we have all the mountains to cross with great toil and difficulty. Had it been then known that the Indians descend the Rio de la Pasion in canoes, from the place where it passes the mountains of Chammá, a day and a half's journey from Cobán to Petén, we might probably have now had a shorter as well as more convenient mode of communicating with the latter place. But by land it is not likely that the road will ever be much abridged, or otherwise materially improved; for if the line of level country be sought out, it will be found to be intersected by numerous rivers not fordable in the wet season, and the crossing of which at any time would be a work of hazard and delay.

Before we leave the country of Cahabón there are two things to be mentioned: the first is that the cotton of those mountains is the best produced in the whole kingdom, being at once fine, white, and extremely soft; it is spun in large quantities by the Indian women. Next it is to be remarked, that in this settlement there are few persons without goître, and that the waters in the highlands, so far from engendering this disease, even cure it; while in the valleys below, on the other hand, they produce it.

Half way down the mountain of Xucamel, south-east of San Pedro, facing the south, stands San Pablo Tamajum, a settlement pertaining to the curacy of Taltic, from which place it is four leagues distant by a miserable road. The elevated situation makes the settlement melancholy; but, in respect to climate, it is advantageously placed between the extremes of temperature. The river Polochic passes through it, descending from Xucamel, where that river has one of its two sources: so near its origin it is no great stream. Four leagues from Tamajum, going along the river, stands San Miguel Tucurú, likewise depending on Taltic. Its climate is extremely hot and moist, as is the case with all the country lower down to the lake of Bodegas and the Gulf; and is consequently well adapted to the cultivation of cacao, cotton, coffee, achiote, indigo and sugar.

About eight leagues or little more below Tucurú, and near the river Polochic, is the site wherein formerly stood the settlement of Santa Catalina, which, according to the accounts of old Indians, was destroyed by the English. At present there is at that place an estate whereon cacao and indigo are cultivated, and where the increase of the cattle speaks

well for the soil and climate. Three leagues lower down is the wharf or landing-place (embarcadero) called Ave María, where the canoes and boats with goods from Honduras used to unload, before the navigation of the river was closed up. By this channel came the images, bells, and ornaments sent from Spain for the churches in the settlements. Two or three leagues further down the river stood the settlement of San Andres Apóstol, which was also destroyed at the same time by the English.

It is impossible to ascertain exactly where the settlement of Xocolo stood near the lake of Bodegas. Nueva Sevilla is said to have been built in 1544 in the plain of Munguijá, three leagues from the port of Honduras, on the bank of the river of Bodegas, by some Spaniards from Yucatán and Cozumel, who wished to take possession of the country; but their oppression of the Indians was carried to such an extent that three years later the royal authority was obliged to interpose and to break up their colonies, which were soon evacuated. The evil, however, was not so easily removed. The discovery of the port and of the means of communication with the interior by the river, entailed lasting vexations on the Indians inhabiting its banks, who were compelled to serve as boatmen and carriers, subject to all kinds of contumely and unfair dealing. The consequence was that they also deserted the country. Formerly, while the settlements flourished and the Indians were numerous on the banks of the Polochic and the shores of the Gulf—when desolation did not as yet reign paramount as it does at present—it was customary for the Prior of Cobán to send to the coast to greet the missionaries arriving from Spain, and to take charge of them in their journey up the country. But at the present day no one would think of sending a messenger from Cobán to the sea-shore; nor would any missionary venture to traverse the unhealthy desert intervening, since those who enter it rarely survive to tell their safety. Yet we are informed that companies of Dominicans have at various times ascended to Cobán by the river Polochic, and certainly that route wants only practicability to be preferable to any other.

From the preceding description it will be seen that the settlements in the elevated country, cold and very humid, are six in number, viz.: Santa Maria Asuncion, of Taltic; Santa Cruz, de Santa Elena; San Cristobal Caccoh; the imperial city of Cobán; San Pedro Carchá, and San Juan Chamelco. The settlements in the warm and dry climates are four, viz.: San Pablo Rabinál; Santiago Cubulco; Santa Cruz del Chól, and San Mateo Salamá; those in the region of great heat and hu-

midity are San Augustin Lanquin, Santa Maria Cahabón, San Miguel Tucurú, and San Pablo Tamajum; making altogether fourteen settlements, now comprised in the province of Vera Paz. Two settlements which were established among the Polochic Indians, viz., Xocolo and San Pablo de Amatique, with New Seville, in the country of the Poconchics, have experienced a like fatè.

C.

RUINS IN THE DISTRICT OF PETEN.

REFERENCE has been made, in the body of this work, to the letter of Colonel Galindo, dated from Palenque, April 27, 1832, and addressed to the Secretary of the Geographical Society of Paris. It is chiefly taken up with an account of the ruins of Palenque, which, however, has been superseded by later and more complete investigations. Incidentally, this letter gives a brief description of the remains found by its author in the district of Peten, which is subjoined in his own language:

"Beaucoup plus loin, à l'autre côté de la ville de Flores (chef-lieu du Peten), se trouve le lac de Yachá de deux lieues de largeur, qui contient quatre petites îles, une desquelles, qui est pierreuse et élevée, ayant plus de mille pas de diamètre, est couverte de débris de pierres; le plus remarquable, c'est une tour carée de cinq étages, chacun de neuf pieds de haut, la base a vingt-deux pas sur chaque côte, et les étages entre deux pieds en dedans de tous les bords: il n'y a acune entrée ni fenêtre dans les premiers quatre étages: mais du côté de l'ouest, un escalier de sept pieds de largeur conduit jusqu' en haut. Les marches de l'escalier n'ont que quatre pouces chacune; deux portes fort basses dans le cinquieme étage, permettent d'y entrer à quatre pattes; et cet étage consiste en trois chambres sans toit, jointes par de semblables petites portes; quoiqu'il y ait apparence par le son, qu'il y a au-dessous un vide, cependant il ne paraît aucune entrée aux premièrs étages: les pierres dont la tour est construite sont un peu plus grandes que celles employées dans le Palenque, mais d'une même forme, qui est la seule ressemblance que je trouve entre l'architecture d'ici et celle de Yachá; soit que les édifices de Yachá soient plus modernes, ou son atmosphère moins corrodante, on

pour d'autres causes; là, des parties des poutres des portes restent encore, d'un bois qu'on appelle *jabin*; mais ici [Palenque], toute espèce de bois a déjà disparu, et il ne reste que des pierres et du plâtre."

D.

NOTE ON GUATEMALA.

The republic of Guatemala comprises sixteen departments, which are expressed in the following table, together with the number of births and deaths, and aggregate increase in population for the year 1852:

DEPARTMENTS.	MARRIAGES.	BIRTHS.	DEATHS.	INCREASE.
Guatemala	240	3,416	1,848	1,568
Sacatepequez	170	1,698	1,192	506
Amatitlan	180	1,458	1,073	408
Escuintla	135	925	421	404
Vera Paz	528	4,260	1,642	2,618
Santa Rosa	149	1,313	466	847
Jutiapa	113	790	291	499
Chiquimula	562	4,155	2,127	2,028
Izabal	32	67	85	18
Chimaltenango	330	2,550	2,192	358
Quezaltenango	403	3,119	1,560	1,559
Huehitenapequez	216	1,682	736	946
Totonicapan	905	5,307	2,896	2,411
Solola	858	3,088	1,697	1,386
San Marcos	592	2,711	1,744	267
Huehuetenango	358	2,411	1,338	1,073
Total	5,536	38,558	21,298	17,478

The total population of the State, in the absence of a satisfactory census, has been estimated at 890,000, distributed over an area of not far from 43,380 square miles, or deducting the territory recently ceded to Great Britain, in connection with the establishment of Belize, 35,000 square miles. Its principal exportable product is cochineal, a variable crop, of which there were sent out of the country, in the year 1849, 1,469,000 pounds; in 1851, 1,231,610; in 1852, 567,000; in 1853, 313,700; in 1854, 1,759,300; in 1855, 1,204,510; 1858, 1,739,000.

The exports and imports of the State for the past four years were as follows:

YEARS.	IMPORTS.	EXPORTS.
1854	$826,481	$2,282,891
1855	1,206,210	1,282,891
1856	1,065,816	1,708,963
1857	1,136,517	1,615,888
1858	1,223,770	1,924,509

The revenues of the State, from customs, for the year 1854, were $182,103; 1855, 287,553.

The total revenues of the State, derived from the liquor and tobacco monopolies and other sources, are, however, much greater, and in the year 1856 amounted to $1,040,444.

A late number of the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* (vol. xxviii., p. 359–362) contains a brief paper, "*On the Latitudes and Longitudes of some of the principle places in the Republic of Guatemala.* By A. Van de Gehuchte. Notwithstanding the somewhat pretentious way in which the facts that it contains are put forward, there seems to be no reason for doubting their accuracy.

The following is Mr. Van Gehuchte's table of latitudes and longitudes of leading places and important points in the Republic. He does not tell us how he obtained the position of Flores. Had he visited the place it seems hardly probable that he would have omitted special mention of the fact.

POSITIONS.	LON. WEST OF GREENWICH.	LATITUDE.
Volcano of Agua	90° 45′ 07″	14° 26′ 48″
" Fuego	90° 58′ 30″	14° 27′ 25″
" Pacaya	90° 36′ 34″	14° 21′ 30″
" Atitlan	91° 12′ 47″	14° 34′ 38″
" Santa Maria	91° 36′ 34″	14° 46′ 39″
" Tajamulco	92° 06′ 07″	15° 09′ 58″
" Tacaná	92° 15′ 17″	15° 24′ 11″
Guatemala	90° 30′ 47″	14° 37′ 30″
La Antigua	90° 44′ 50″	14° 32′ 58″
Amatitlan	90° 37′ 50″	14° 28′ 39″
Escuintla	90° 47′ 48″	14° 16′ 46″
Chimaltenango	90° 49′ 30″	14° 38′ 49″
Sololá	91° 12′ 14″	14° 46′ 54″
Totonicapan	91° 21′ 45″	14° 58′ 18″
Quesaltenango	91° 34′ 20″	14° 51′ 32″
Güeguetenango	91° 36′ 50″	15° 28′ 15″
Chiquimula	89° 32′ 17″	14° 54′ 10″
Mazatenango	91° 33′ 14″	14° 40′ 42″
Salama	90° 24′ 47″	15° 17′ 10″
Flores (Peten)	90° 04′ 52″	17° 09′ 47″
Iztapa	90° 43′ 00″	13° 53′ 58″
San José (port)	90° 09′ 27″	13° 53′ 93″
San Luis (port)	91° 51′ 29″	14° 09′ 07″

The mean results of sixty-four observations for latitude, and numerous calculations for longitude, made, it would appear, from the cathedral of the city of Guatemala, give the position of that point, lat. 14° 37′ 30″ N.; lon. 90° 30′ 47″ W. from Greenwich. Mr. Van Geinuchte's triangulation fixed the cathedral, as above, at a distance of a little less than fifty-two miles, in a right line, from the port of Istapa, on the Pacific, in lat. 13° 52′ 52″ N., and lon. 90° 43′ W. from Greenwich. He also fixed the vertical line of the summit of the volcano of Pacaya at a distance of nineteen miles from the cathedral, that of the Volcan de Agua at twenty miles, and that of the Volcan de Fuego, twenty-eight miles.

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